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**TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM—
A UNITY OF EFFORT**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM—A UNITY OF EFFORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, October 28, 2015.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 3:38 p.m., in room 2212, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Joseph J. Heck (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH J. HECK, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEVADA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

Dr. HECK. We will go ahead and call the hearing to order again. I apologize for the delay.

Just as a disclaimer, we are going to have another vote series somewhere around 4:50 to 5:20. So while we did ask initially for the witnesses to make their statements 5 minutes in length, we are going to ask if you can try to condense it to 3 minutes to the best of your ability. And we will make sure that your written statements are entered in their entirety into the record. Our hope is to at least get through the first panel before the next vote series.

So I want to welcome everyone to this hearing where our focus is on the collaboration between the Department of Defense and private organizations to assist service members who are transitioning to civilian life.

We are all well aware that the Army and the Marine Corps are downsizing, with a plan to reduce 40,000 soldiers and 2,000 Marines by 2018. Undoubtedly, such cuts put strain on our service members and their families. These reductions in end strengths represent additional service members that will be asked to leave the military on top of the more than 165,000 service members that separate every year.

We owe these transitioning service members and their families a robust system that prepares them for life after the military. We want to make sure they can continue to make the same caliber of contributions to society once they take their uniforms off that they made to our Nation's security while in uniform.

Today's hearing continues our commitment to ensuring that the Transition Assistance Program meets the needs of transitioning service members, not only through a whole-of-government approach but also by partnering with organizations who share our commitment to help service members successfully transition from military service.

I am interested to hear from our first panel how they connect with individuals who are leaving the military and what services they offer to assist. I am also interested to hear from our DOD [Department of Defense] and military services how they include organizations such as those represented here today in the Transition Assistance Program.

In response to the increasing need to help prepare individuals for post-service opportunities such as employment, higher education, or entrepreneurial endeavors, Congress and DOD have continually worked to improve the Transition Assistance Program. So I am interested to hear from our DOD and military service witnesses whether the recent changes have produced the desired results. For example, in your view, are service members transitioning today better prepared for post-service life as compared to those transitioning 5 years ago?

With that, I want to welcome our witnesses, and I look forward to our testimony.

Before I introduce our first panel, let me offer Congresswoman Susan Davis an opportunity to make her opening remarks.

Mrs. Davis.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Heck can be found in the Appendix on page 35.]

STATEMENT OF HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As we know, each year, over 100,000 service members transition out of Active military service back into civilian society. The Department and the military services have made considerable strides—my notes here say “great strides.” I am not so sure I am willing to say “great strides,” but considerable strides toward improving the Transition Assistance Program. It has evolved from one mandatory class to an integrated effort between the service member, the chain of command, and the transition assistance cadre, spanning several months or even longer, to ensure our young men and women are set up for success.

Although improvements have definitely been made, as our witnesses I know will attest today, there is still much work to be done. Our first panel represents one area in which the Department needs continued improvement and involvement, working with qualified civilian organizations that maintain the momentum of transitioning service members back into society. I certainly look forward to hearing from our first panel on their two different approaches to helping service members transition. Both of these organizations, of course, are innovative and potentially life-changing.

We will also be hearing from the second panel on how DOD and the services plan to work with organizations such as zero8hundred and American Dream U to improve successful transition of our service members back into the community. Definitely, their response to what you present and you bring is very important to us, as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to our witnesses.

Dr. HECK. Great.

So I will introduce our first panel. We have Mr. Phil Randazzo, founder of American Dream U; Mr. Scott Mann with American Dream U; and Mr. Sean Mahoney, Executive Director of zero8hundred.

Again, I ask the witnesses to condense, to the best of their ability, their testimony.

And, with that, Mr. Randazzo, you are recognized for 3 minutes.

STATEMENT OF PHIL RANDAZZO, FOUNDER, AMERICAN DREAM U

Mr. RANDAZZO. Chairman Dr. Heck, Ranking Member Susan Davis, and distinguished members of the committee, it is truly an honor to be invited to testify in front of such an esteemed body. Thank you for the opportunity.

If we had to assure that every single veteran transitioning out of the military was able to extract every ounce of clarity and value from his or her own experience, résumé, drive, discipline, personality, and follow-through to have the best chance, to get the best job, how would we in this room do that?

In founding American Dream U, I have had the opportunity to bring in over 140 world-class entrepreneurs and business leaders across 8 installations, including the Pentagon. They have shared their successes, failures, insights, tactics, and strategies with Active Duty military, spouses, dependents, and veterans.

I would like everyone in this room to look back and think and connect the dots, how they got here. I would argue that it is the people you met and the books you read, not the books you read in high school or in college, but the books that were recommended to you by friends and colleagues; not the people you met in college or in high school, but maybe a company commander, an event you attended, or a friend introduction.

What I have noticed is some negative talk surrounding becoming an entrepreneur or entrepreneurial thinking. The service members are getting pigeonholed into whatever their MOS [military occupational specialty] was in the military for job opportunities during transitioning. From speaking to hundreds of service members, I am not convinced this is a path to a successful transition.

I had the opportunity to speak to the folks at the VA [Department of Veterans Affairs], when discussion of becoming an entrepreneur came up, we heard, "Ninety-six percent of businesses fail. We want them to have a degree, that certificate on the wall, plan B." Does that general degree carry as much weight as it does in 2015?

Dozens of service members at our conferences have asked this question: "We have been trained since the first day of boot camp that failure is not an option; it results in a teammate getting injured or killed. We have heard from all your speakers that failure is okay and even encouraged. I am struggling with this." I think the discussion during the transition needs to address this. It is okay to fail in the civilian world. Everyone in this room has had failures, and that is okay, even valuable.

I think the people who run transition are great Americans. I am not convinced they are open to new ideas, up to the latest tactics and strategies, or emphasize the importance of finding your pur-

pose, self-education, the value of networking, and finding a great mentor. Self-education is extremely important.

In 2015 and beyond, the area of focus needs to be in the technology space, robotics, health care, finances. Nano certificates, job apprenticeships, and job shadowings need to be encouraged.

Twelve months before transitioning out of the military, I think every veteran, soldier, marine, airman, sailor, coastguardsman, spouse should read books like "Start With Why" by Simon Sinek, "Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill, "How to Win Friends and Influence People" by Dale Carnegie. Simon Sinek has been paid by several installations and has spoken at the Pentagon. We think we can do better.

In working with hundreds of businesses over my 20-plus-years career as an entrepreneur, the number-one hiring criteria is finding those that are flexible, resourceful, show initiative, work well with teams, and show up on time. This defines the veteran. We owe our military to strive to do better.

It has been an honor and a privilege to work with our military, and I am constantly humbled in their presence.

I look forward to your questions or comments.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Randazzo can be found in the Appendix on page 36.]

Dr. HECK. Thank you.

Mr. Mann.

STATEMENT OF SCOTT MANN, AMERICAN DREAM U

Mr. MANN. Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Susan Davis, and distinguished members of the committee, thanks for the opportunity to tell you the transition story of warriors, our warriors, who just don't seem to have quite the voice these days that they probably should.

I have spent my entire life as a U.S. Army Special Forces Green Beret, and in those 22 years of service in many dark places around the world, one thing I have learned is the benefit of going local, immersing yourself in the problem to get a perspective of what is going on. And that is the perspective that I would like to provide you today on transition.

As an entrepreneur and advocate for nonprofit work in transition, I work with military members as I train them in special skills but also working with them as they prepare to leave the service that they know and love.

The other day, I was talking to a special ops master sergeant, I will call him Steve, who was going through transition from the Army. And I hadn't seen him in a while, so I asked him how things were going. Do you know what he told me? He said that he would rather go back to Afghanistan four more times than to ever go through transition again.

How is that possible? Here is a man who has known more pain, suffered more family stress, lost more friends, and seen more violence than any warrior I know of, yet he would go back and do it all again four more times than to ever go through transition again. Something isn't working.

The challenges of transition, having gone through them myself, are enormous. Our service men and women have been fighting the

longest war in our Nation's history. The corrosive arena of combat is placing unprecedented strain on not just our military men and women but their families. They face a massive drawdown, as well. And as ISIS [Islamic State in Iraq and Syria] and other extremist groups expand, the stress of operational tempo on those service members who remain in service is likely to go even higher, which is going to mean less time for them to prepare for transition and even more stress for transition in the future.

Whether these warriors get out of the military unexpectedly due to a drawdown or whether they get out on a scheduled departure, as I did, they will likely have fresh dust on their boots, gunpowder residue on their hands, and not a lot of time to even remotely contemplate the challenges of transition. Add these to a tough economy and a low job market, and it is no wonder that many of our veterans are terrified of coming home.

Now, that is the tough news. But let's not forget that these warriors are high performers. They are complex problem solvers. Our warriors possess immense leadership skills that, frankly, society is demanding more and more every day. So the question is, how do we bring them home and integrate them into the communities that desperately need their leadership and their loyalty?

Well, again, this Green Beret's perspective from the village, a few things: One, this problem is probably going to get worse before it gets better. Two, the current DOD and VA programs of transition are simply overmatched for this massive undertaking. And, three, the private sector is essential in bringing home our veterans to a life of honor and happiness.

To expound a bit further, and I hope I get a chance to expand on this today, is we must help our veterans reconnect to their higher purpose. We should connect our veterans to relevant civilian players in the community. And we need to empower veterans to learn how to tell their story when they come home. I believe that this is a challenge for both the private sector and the public sector and that history is going to judge us on our ability to do that.

One of my best friends and former soldiers, Romy Camargo, a quadriplegic wounded in Afghanistan 7 years ago, working with just a six-person advisory board from the community in Tampa, Florida, in just over a year managed to raise \$750,000 and open a nonprofit center that is treating dozens of people, to include severely wounded veterans.

My belief is that if the community can come together under those kinds of extreme situations, there is nothing that we can't do when we partner with folks like Mr. Randazzo and our military leadership.

Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mann can be found in the Appendix on page 43.]

Dr. HECK. Thank you.

Mr. Mahoney.

**STATEMENT OF SEAN MAHONEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ZERO8HUNDRED**

Mr. MAHONEY. Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the oppor-

tunity to appear today. I would like to explain a partnership with military bases in San Diego that provides a community handoff from transition classes.

Every year, approximately 20,000 service members stationed in San Diego County leave the service, and 30 percent are expected to stay in the area. Many of these individuals experience difficulty with transition.

San Diego community leaders realized that numerous organizations were there to assist but there was a gap between these resources and service members, who are often unaware of them. These leaders developed a plan to close this gap without duplicating existing services. This was called the Military Transition Support Project [MTSP] and implemented as “zero8hundred” to illustrate the promise that comes with a new day.

Zero8hundred addresses four areas of veterans’ wellness: employment and education, health, basic needs, and personal connections. Zero8hundred provides transition support from 9 months prior to separation to 12 months afterwards. This begins with a presentation on base at Navy and Coast Guard transition classes, where those remaining in San Diego County have the opportunity to opt in.

These zero8hundred clients are called VIPs, for Veterans or Spouses in Process, and they get proactive check-ins, starting with a call the following week from a zero8hundred navigator or caseworker. All of our caseworkers are either veterans, military dependents, or spouses, and all are in a master’s of social work program or have a master’s of social work.

The partnership with local military bases began in 2013 with a memorandum of understanding [MOU] with Navy Region Southwest that was signed in 2014. That allows the program to be presented during the classes. The MOU also indicates that MTSP’s zero8hundred is responsible for providing an essential organizing point for community resources. The program does this by utilizing 2–1–1, San Diego’s database of 6,000 vetted resources in the community, to make them available to anyone who is transitioning.

We train Navy contract instructors to make the presentations in the TGPS [Transition, Goals, Plans, Success] classes and began at Naval Base San Diego in January of this year. We expanded to Naval Base Coronado in February and the Coast Guard in March.

The first 2 years of the program are the pilot phase, and the goal of the initial stage was to evaluate the impact on the first 300 VIPs. Response has been very positive, and we hit this 300 enrollment goal 8 months into the program. It has been presented on 89 transition classes on base, and over 30 percent of eligible personnel have opted into the program. Many also choose to self-navigate to resources via our Web site, and 9,000 sessions have been recorded.

Zero8hundred navigators have been reaching out to these VIPs to discuss their challenges, to handle case management, and to offer warm referrals to organizations that can assist them, and then follow up to see how they were helped. University of San Diego’s Caster Family Center is conducting a third-party evaluation to measure outcomes.

We value our positive relationship with the military bases that help make this community initiative possible. And I want to thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mahoney can be found in the Appendix on page 51.]

Dr. HECK. Thank you.

I thank you all for being so succinct in your opening comments. Hopefully, we will have enough time to delve more deeply into your written testimony as well as the questions.

Mr. RANDAZZO. Tell us how you connect with individuals who are leaving the military to introduce them to American Dream U and the programs you offer. How do you get access to them? Are you going on base? Is it base-to-base? Is it a pilot program? How are you reaching out and touching those lives?

Mr. RANDAZZO. Yeah, so we just came back from Fort Bragg, and we were invited by the DC [deputy commander] General Jeff Smith. And so we work, typically, with the garrison and then the TAP [Transition Assistance Program]. And then we have also been introduced to the BOSS, the Better Opportunity for Single Soldiers. We did an event for their national conference last month, where Mr. Mann spoke.

And so we are going to be hitting all of the Transition and the BOSS. And so we have done 13 events, Mr. Chairman, at 9 different installations. We have had a little over 4,000 attend. And I can provide feedback from those.

Dr. HECK. But how do you get access or how do you get to each one of those locations? Is it by invitation? Or are you going and soliciting and saying, "Hey, we are here. Can we come on base?" How does that work?

Mr. RANDAZZO. So we have been working through the CGs [commanding generals], through the commanders. So Fort Bragg was our third event. So they saw something in the first event, so they invited us back for a second and third. We have been to Fort Hood twice. We are heading back to Fort Benning for a second time. So we have asked to come, and then we have been invited back.

Dr. HECK. Okay.

So has there been any thought given or any attempts made to approach DOD of making this, you know, a program that is offered automatically across installations, as opposed to you having to go and, you know, present yourself to each CG at each installation and get access?

Mr. RANDAZZO. I wouldn't even know, Chairman, how to even—

Dr. HECK. Okay.

Mr. RANDAZZO [continuing]. Start to ask the DOD to be a part of the program.

Dr. HECK. Yeah, neither would we, but we will get to that.

So it is clear from your testimony that American Dream U focuses on entrepreneurship and leading within organizations. It is kind of like the "Shark Tank" of transition.

TAP GPS [Goals, Plans, Success] includes optional tracks, one of which focuses on entrepreneurship. Are you familiar with that track? And if so, what is your view of the information provided? And what recommendations do you have to improve that program?

Mr. RANDAZZO. So I would like to be clear: So we are not just entrepreneurship programs. We talk about different tactics and strategies to find jobs. I didn't get to it in my opening statement, but LinkedIn is not talked about in class, and I heard today that it is going to start to be. I think that is a very effective way to get connected with jobs. We talk a lot about different tactics on how to find a job that you actually don't need an alarm clock to wake up to go to.

But, yeah, so I have reviewed all the Boots to Business program that is run by the SBA [Small Business Association]. I think it is very academic. I am an entrepreneur, and I like to learn from people who have actually done it. And so I think part of our program being effective is bringing in those entrepreneurs and kind of cutting in line, learning from the masters, versus maybe reading out of a manual. But I think it is definitely a start if someone wants to be an entrepreneur.

Dr. HECK. Great. Thank you.

Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all again for being here.

I remember quite a number of years ago how difficult it was to start coordinating some of the efforts out there. And it seemed like everybody wanted to help, which was wonderful, but, on the other hand, it was really important to try and figure out what the goals were, I think, for different organizations.

And so I am wondering whether the programs that you know about in other areas—and your focus has been on the entrepreneurial piece of that, to a certain extent, and Mr. Mann as well. I am thinking with Mr. Mahoney—whether does all that sort of resonate together? Or do you see these programs as distinctly very, very different?

Mr. MAHONEY. Ma'am, I can give our perspective on that.

Zero8hundred welcomes the different diverse programs that are out there. I think they are different, and I think that that is great, even if there is some overlapping. But we would like to be in a position to offer two or three solutions to a service member when they get out and refer them to them and see which one they choose, which one is best for them. So I think that that is excellent.

Mrs. DAVIS. Uh-huh. So providing multiple tracks but also you are, perhaps by the emphasis, you are able to do a lot in that area.

Mr. MANN. Correct. And with my smaller nonprofit, Mission America, and working closely with Mr. Randazzo, you are right, I mean, there are tens of thousands of nonprofits out there, all, most of them, really trying to do good things. But as a veteran who transitioned, it is overwhelming when you see the number of folks out there. It is hard to sort it out.

I believe the doors are wide open right now for a no-kidding, strong private-public partnership on this that is very collaborative and allows groups like American Dream U and Mission America, where I go in and talk to veterans, as a veteran who is an entrepreneur and has transitioned, about what they are going to see on the other side, to be positioned players and be supporting efforts to DOD as they step through this, just with the acknowledgement that it is more than a TAP program, it is really, it is a process.

Transition is a, the Green Beret Foundation calls it “The Next Ridgeline.” It is a long patrol. It is not something that is done in 10 days. It is a process like any other mission. And that is why I named it Mission America, is because it really is about getting these guys and gals with the right skill sets and looking at it as another mission, holistically, beyond just jobs and entrepreneurialism. So collaboration is going to be essential.

Mrs. DAVIS. Uh-huh. Yeah.

If I may, Mr. Mahoney, one of the issues sometimes organizations find is that when they are involved in mentoring programs or ways in which the community is really playing a critical role, sometimes that staying power is a little tough to achieve. I think often it is based on having good facilitators, good follow-up, a kind of esprit de corps among the people that are engaged in this.

Have you found that to be helpful? How does that happen, you know, that you have people who really are staying with the cause and feel very, very much indebted? It is a two-way street. You know, it is not that person is sacrificing by being part of this program, but getting so much out of it.

And so I wanted you to speak to that for a second and, also, how that is happening in your Tier 3-level VIPs, whether you are finding a need to have people with special skill sets that really are able to relate far better to Tier 3 VIPs.

Mr. MAHONEY. Yes, ma’am. I would say that it is a challenge sometimes to get people to continue to focus on their own transition as they are getting out. And one of the lessons that we have learned is it is more difficult for us—our VIPs to enroll 9 months prior to separation, and they are much more actively involved in their transition maybe 90 days before they get out, because they start to realize that it is coming up very quickly. So we do get a change in their focus at that point.

I will say, on the flip side of it, in the veteran’s community, there is a lot of commitment for folks to stay with the cause and help them out. And a lot of times they are frustrated that the service members aren’t coming to them.

Mrs. DAVIS. Oh, okay. Yeah.

In those situations, then, who works to try and make sure that that relationship is building so that it is a satisfactory one on both sides?

Mr. MAHONEY. We do, ma’am. Well, one thing we do is we have the different—many of the different resources and agencies come meet with our navigators, so our navigators are familiar with many of the different nonprofits and their different areas of emphasis. And that way, when our navigators explain the resources that are available to the VIP, they can explain it in a way that it is really a handoff. It is a personal connection, that they will do a personal referral and a warm handoff to that agency.

And to answer your question about the Tier 3, it is hit or miss. I mean, some of our folks are Tier 3, where they may be a single mom getting out with a small child. Maybe they are going to be evicted in a week. And they might be very, very engaged with our navigators. And some, it is frustrating that they will be engaged and then they will drop off and try to handle things themselves.

Mrs. DAVIS. Does there seem to be a difference whether you are in face-to-face contact or by telephone, by cell? What are you advising people to use, in terms of their method of engaging?

Mr. MAHONEY. We engage mostly by phone, ma'am. And then for a Tier 3 VIP, we would encourage them to come into the office.

Mrs. DAVIS. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Randazzo, you mentioned that you hadn't yet—my time is up. We will go another round. Thank you.

Thanks so much.

Dr. HECK. Ms. Tsongas.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you all for being here. I appreciate the commitment you obviously all demonstrate as you are responding to different needs that you have identified within the transition services that are being provided.

And just to add a little context to that, every year I have a meeting with a roundtable of veterans from the 3rd District of Massachusetts. We have a great tradition of service. And, just last week, I was able to meet with them, and, in the course of it, I always do ask, sort of, how the programs that are out there are addressing their needs.

We met in a university setting, so I was glad to hear that the GI Bill had made a real difference for many of those returning. A good number of them had taken advantage of it, were at the university and getting the degrees that they needed to go on.

But one of the themes that I really heard was that transition assistance has to be more than a one-time event and that it needs to be broad enough to enable veterans to make the most of all the different services that are out there, so whether they are medical, financial, educational, whatever it may be that are open to them and their families.

So even the GI Bill, for example, may not seem like the right thing when you are first getting out of the services, but, as you ease into your new life, suddenly it looms larger as an opportunity.

And as outreach programs do exist—as I said, you all are responding to needs that you have identified—I have found that veterans I have spoken to often are not fully aware of the range of programs or even the existence of the kinds of organizations that you represent and the benefits that are available to them.

And, again, what we heard, I think, from all of them and have heard over time is that the program has to reflect a long-term commitment, that they have to be responsive to them in a long-term setting, especially in the job market, in the era of seeking jobs, because that market is so dynamic.

So we have an interest in developing entrepreneurs. That is a great thing. And I agree with you; the leadership skills that have been developed for those serving are remarkable, and there are many places for those skills to be exercised. And a mentoring program and an example set is always very good, but sometimes it may get a dream going in your head but you still don't know how to follow on and realize it.

So I am curious with all of you, as in the job-market context—we know all the other needs that are out there—and in a very dynamic environment, how are you providing assistance or programs that reflect the dynamism of our times so that you are not outdated

from day one as somebody is moving from one—thinking about one thing to another to another?

Mr. RANDAZZO. No, those are all great comments.

So I think what is really important is, today, if they are not able to tell their story, and I am going to let Mr. Mann, he has done phenomenal work with having soldiers tell their story, but the importance of working together as groups.

So when we just go to a base, we spend a weekend with them, and we just don't leave. We give them scripts and tactics to use, whether it is for salary negotiations or it is even a script to contact maybe a veteran that works in an organization that you may want to work with and then use those scripts to get into that organization. Because the days of sending out your résumé just doesn't work. No one is reading résumés; computers are reading résumés. Most jobs are found within an organization. So if you can network in and have scripts already tailored towards you and you can just kind of tweak them, I think it is a very valuable tool. And so those are some of the tools.

And then, when we leave, we set up meet-up groups so they can meet up as a group and take ownership of it and have organizers within there so that they can hold themselves accountable to making LinkedIn connections, you know, to go to maybe different events in the community and to network. Very, very important.

Ms. TSONGAS. And those follow-on activities would seem to be very important. Yeah.

Mr. MANN. Thank you for that question.

I work with veterans at a very grassroots level from all services, spending a lot of time trying to get our head around what is challenging them as they come into transition and then going to speak on it. And what I have found is that most of our military warriors today, they absolutely love what they do for a living. In fact, it satisfies such a high calling for their inner purpose, and it is so in line with it, they almost don't even think about it.

But what happens is, when they separate from service, there is all this emphasis on getting a job and just stepping into civil society, and they kind of leave that inner purpose back in their team room, back in their platoon bay, back in their ready room, and they are not as aware as they could be and should be of what it is that really makes them tick. What brought them in the military? What was it that kept them in the military in those dark times when they lost buddies and friends?

And when you leave that kind of purpose behind, even if you get a great job, and with the kind of caustic combat that they have seen, in many cases, it makes transition very tough. So just one thing is getting familiar with each warrior's purpose well before they transition. You know, that is a very important thing.

The second thing is the ability to tell their story. We are hardwired as warriors not to talk about ourselves. We are hardwired to talk about our teammates and maybe a few other things, but, for the most part, when they step into civil society, they are not telling their story. And folks like Mr. Randazzo and others, they want to hear their stories, because it really has a massive impact. And it has huge healing powers on the kind of combat stress that many of these warriors have been through.

So teaching them and empowering them to tell their own story is the second thing that we do at Mission America and that I work with Bill on.

And then, finally, we call it “keeping the light on in the team room.” Military warriors are some of the most collaborative, communicative people in the world. We can go into any rough spot, and we can figure it out. We will build a team around it and get it done. For some reason, when we walk into civil society, we don’t do that. We don’t stay connected to the team that we had, and we sure don’t build new teams.

So those are just three areas where we put a lot of emphasis to hopefully be position players for TAP and others to meet a need that, if we don’t address it, it is going to come calling at the end.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you.

I have run out of time, and I am sorry, Mr. Mahoney, I can’t hear your answer.

Thank you.

Dr. HECK. I think we will have time for a second round, so stand by.

Mr. Knight.

Mr. KNIGHT. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know, it is interesting, when I ETS’d [estimated time served] out of the Army years and years ago, it was go around, make sure that everything is cleared. You know, everybody is walking with their briefcase or their folder or whatever. And, of course, on your folder, it says, “I am ETSing, I am going back to the world,” or whatever.

And, to me, back then, that was it. I was applying to college. I was going to college. I had a mission, and I was ready to go. But a lot of guys were like, “I don’t know what I am going to do. I am going to go home, and I am going to figure it out when I get home.” And that seems to be the problem.

Now, I live in a real military area, next to a base. A lot of retirees, a lot of young folks that are coming home, and a lot of people that are trying to transition back into the, kind of, private sector. The biggest thing I see is—and I know the military has changed since I left, but the biggest thing I see is, once they leave the military, there is a little bit of a gap there. And I know some of your organizations step up and take over that gap. And we have some in my area.

What do we do with those people that say that they have it all figured out? They have done everything that they can, they are going to college, or they have a job, or they are—they have everything worked out. Because some of those people might not have it worked out, and, after a couple years, they figure, what the heck am I doing?

So do we have something that, maybe not tracks them, but gives them that card and says, hey, look, we would like to talk to you every couple months, or we would like to check in with you, just make sure you are doing everything—everything is going right?

Mr. MAHONEY. Yes, sir. Good question.

With our organization, with zero8hundred, we have a case management system that drives those follow-on calls. So we have the initial call with them right after the class, and then they discuss

their needs. And as you are kind of alluding to there, their needs change over time. They may have everything all wired, and then 3 months later they maybe aren't in that situation anymore. So those follow-on calls discuss their new needs and can connect them to resources.

And all those calls are recorded in the case management system so that, when that navigator goes back, he can refresh his memory on his conversation with the customer or client, and he can start the conversation from that point.

But I think having that 21 months of those check-in calls can really help the transitioning service member.

Mr. MANN. Thank you, Mr. Knight.

One other best practice that I have seen that seems to work pretty well that we might think about sharing with the services is the smaller organizations like special forces and the Navy SEAL, the Honor Foundation, special forces with Next Ridgeline, the foundations aligned with those outfits do a pretty good job of keeping track of guys as they go deeper into transition. It is a little easier to do that.

But one thing, you know, that might be considered for a best practice is, with the services, the foundations that are aligned with the services could possibly play a role in that deep tracking like that. Because it is an involved process to do that. A lot of these guys go off the grid, you know, and they kind of go dark, and it is hard to do, even in smaller organizations like special forces.

Mr. KNIGHT. Mr. Chair, I want to thank you, and I want to thank these groups. You know, it is a difficult thing, carrying a ruck one day in a desert and then, a month later, you are in an office and you are looking around at a different environment. So it is a difficult transition.

I appreciate what you are doing.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. RANDAZZO. Can I make one comment on that?

Mr. KNIGHT. Yes, sir. Absolutely.

Mr. RANDAZZO. We are only 2 years plus a few months, but we gather their personal email addresses, and for those that have attended our first event, we keep in touch with them weekly with newsletters. And you are right; sometimes when we are there it doesn't click. But when they are ready, they are ready, and so they will reach out to us.

So we have had some real good success in getting feedback and emails back from maybe a soldier who attended 18 months ago and now they are ready.

Mr. KNIGHT. Very good.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Dr. HECK. Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In terms of the transition, what is a briefing on Active Duty in terms of on-the-job training opportunities and apprenticeship training opportunities run by the VA?

It is my understanding that there just isn't much of a knowledge that the veterans have, in terms of Active Duty personnel when they exit the military, about that particular option. And so it is in law, but it is dramatically underutilized.

Mr. RANDAZZO. Are you talking about the last 6 months of their service where they can do a job apprentice or job shadow?

Mr. COFFMAN. No. When they actually go through the out-briefings, that it is available to them under the Veterans Administration. It is my understanding that the soldiers, marines, airmen, and sailors are really not made aware of that particular opportunity.

Mr. RANDAZZO. Yeah, so I am aware of a program for the last 6 months of their service.

Mr. COFFMAN. Right, yeah.

Mr. RANDAZZO. They are allowed to do a program, and maybe you are not aware of it, but—

Mr. COFFMAN. No, I am aware of that program.

Mr. RANDAZZO. Gotcha.

Mr. COFFMAN. This is after they leave Active Duty.

Dr. HECK. That might be a question better suited for the second panel.

Mr. COFFMAN. Okay.

Mr. RANDAZZO. But I think that program, sir, is one of the best programs that the military could offer in the VA or the DOL [Department of Labor] can offer is a job shadow and apprentice. I think that should be emphasized more.

And I think some of the rules should be laxer on that. It is a 50-mile radius. So, for example, Fort Hood is 61 miles from Austin, Texas. I mean, there is a lot of growth and opportunities in Austin, Texas. JBLM [Joint Base Lewis-McChord] to St. Louis—to Seattle, same thing. Fort Bragg, which I was just at, to Raleigh that is just outside of that mile radius.

So I think there are some things that could be tweaked in that to make it better.

Mr. COFFMAN. Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. HECK. We will go around with a second round.

Mr. Mahoney, I would imagine that, based on the success that your program has had, there would be other communities interested in trying to replicate what you have done and not recreate the wheel. Could you discuss any specific challenges you had in establishing your program and how you overcame those challenges?

What I find often is that, when there is a community organization or a not-for-profit or somebody who is trying to gain access to a base to provide a service, that is usually one of the biggest obstacles that they have to overcome. Did you face that same thing? And if so, how did you overcome that and, as well, any other challenges that you might have had?

Mr. MAHONEY. Yes, Mr. Chairman. We had the Navy on our ops committee, which is really the planning committee, and the leadership and oversight committee from the start. So we were fortunate that Admiral Dixon Smith, who is now the chief of Naval Installations Command, was the regional commander—very interested in transition and was participating in some of those meetings. So he was engaged from the start. We also had a representative from Marine Corps Recruit Depot on our committee, as well, so that helped.

But it still, even with that level of engagement, it still took about 9 months to get the memorandum of understanding through the

legal staff at the region. So that was challenging. We were very pleased that it did get through and did get approved.

I know that one of the concerns is, if you let one organization on base, then you are letting thousands, perhaps, on base. And one of the things that we tried to explain is that we are really a neutral connector; we are connecting people to resources. We are not going to duplicate what many of the other great organizations are doing in San Diego. And I know that had to be sort of socialized with the nonprofits and the other agencies in San Diego. We were happy to have the VA on our board, as well. And I think that helped us get past some of those challenges.

Dr. HECK. Thank you.

Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

I am wondering about scaling up. You know, every time we have a really great pilot doing something that works, we often want to take that to another level. And sometimes the conditions, the personalities, the demographics, what have you, that there is something that is different enough and it doesn't work.

What are some of the thoughts that you have about your programs? We are going to talk, the next panel, about the relationship with the DOD, and so I know that you don't necessarily want to get into that. But do you have an interest in that? And what do you see as some of the ways that you would go about doing that? What do you need from the Congress or, you know, from the Department?

Mr. RANDAZZO. So, yes, so, definitely, we do want to scale. And so online and technology gives us the option to do that. So we have an app that we have developed, a transition app, and we are coming out with another version here in the next 90 days. We also have online programming that will feed them in a good sequence of order of different techniques and strategies; as well as we have over 140 TED-type videos online that we can sequence to them, along with workable, actionable steps they can take after watching and take action.

So, yes, we definitely would like to scale, but we need to activate this 18 months prior to them leaving. And I had a great conversation before. It should even be maybe 3 or 4 or 5 years before they transition out, some of these things. And we have almost developed a more of a leadership-type role summit versus a transition, and that is from some of the CGs that we have dealt with and that have sat in our program for 2 or 3 days.

Mrs. DAVIS. Uh-huh.

Mr. MANN. If I could just offer one thing to that, it is understanding that, as a former Army officer, going deeper into the life pattern of the service member, that is harder because you have a war to fight, you know, you have to retain numbers, and you have to do the mission. And that becomes very hard when you are trying to train and deploy.

So one of the things I might suggest, too, in the private-public partnership realm is some kind of collaborative council that meets with entrepreneurs and leaders and military leadership and even military personnel serving at the lower levels, to come together and find ways to do that, because there are ways.

I built my real estate portfolio still on Active Duty serving in a special forces group. A lot of it was offline work that I had to do in my own time, but the point is there are ways that this stuff can be provided that isn't necessarily intrusive into the daily military cycle.

But a collaborative forum to do that, you know, it is not going to be sorted out here. It is going to take some time and the right people in the room.

Mrs. DAVIS. Uh-huh.

Mr. RANDAZZO. Ma'am, I will just say that we would like to expand access to our program. We are growing to meet the large demand that we are seeing already. We would like to expand to Camp Pendleton this year.

USD [University of San Diego], as part of their evaluation, the third-party evaluation of the outcomes, is also documenting how the program was rolled out so it could be potentially replicated in other communities.

And as far as what could be done by government, grant programs would be helpful. If there are grants that we could pursue for community-based handoffs from the transition courses, that would be terrific. And, also, we would be pursuing those kind of grants through county and more local government, as well.

Mrs. DAVIS. Uh-huh. Great.

Thank you.

Dr. HECK. Ms. Tsongas.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you all again.

So, as veterans are seeking you all out for one reason or another, I am curious what they are telling you about what has been most effective with regard to the transition services that they have been offered through the DOD and where are there shortfalls.

If we could start with you, Mr. Mahoney.

Mr. MAHONEY. I think, from my perspective, the transition classes on base are effective if the—you basically get what you put into those courses. If the service member goes there and is participating and they are anxious to learn and they are going to leave there and make progress with their future, that can be effective for them. It won't be effective for them if they are in the class and not paying attention and focused on other things.

So we have seen that. It is frustrating that there are things that are available for them that can be effective that, in some cases, they don't take advantage of.

I think the courses on base also that are directed towards education and other specific areas, we refer them back to the base for those courses, and they can be effective, as well.

Ms. TSONGAS. Do you hear why there might be some who don't take advantage of it? Do you see a reason why some are more likely to do it and others not?

Mr. MAHONEY. I would say, ma'am, that it is a little bit of complacency. There might be overconfidence in how marketable their skills will be when they get out of the service. They may not have a realistic expectation of, say, their salary range or how long it will take and how much effort it is going to take to get employment.

Ms. TSONGAS. Okay.

Mr. Mann.

Mr. MANN. Just a little different twist to that. The folks that I have talked to, they are sprinting all the way to the finish line. They still have dust on their boots, and they don't have a lot of time to really process the notion of transition. And so, you know, it is a mindset. And it is more than just the TAP program. It is getting yourself ready for that.

And so, in many cases, they are going into transition having just come off deployments, having just come off training missions. And what I hear often is just frustration that transition happened so quickly and there just wasn't time to prepare. And then they find themselves, you know, in a brand-new world, trying to figure it out.

Ms. TSONGAS. So it is more a timing issue?

Mr. MANN. Operational tempo and timing, I think.

Ms. TSONGAS. Okay.

Mr. Randazzo.

Mr. RANDAZZO. I would add, I think it is also a delivery issue. I understand—I have not sat through a class. I have finally been invited to sit through a class. I am going to sit through one at Fort Bragg. But I understand there are hundreds of PowerPoints throughout a 5-day period. And a 26-year-old soldier who might be transitioning out, a marine, may not—that might not be engaging to them. So I think more interaction, I think more technology tools.

And the manuals they receive, I mean, it is 15 pounds of manuals. I am not sure if printing those are super-effective. I think you can provide those digitally.

But I think there needs to be more engagement. The one thing that I have heard is that the people who deliver this, they are rushing through slides. And I have heard from about a dozen people who are going through it right now, it is, "Hey, let's get through these last 45 slides, and let's work through lunch, and we'll get you guys out of here by 2:30." And so I don't think that is the message that soldiers need to hear.

Ms. TSONGAS. Thank you.

Thank you. I yield back.

Dr. HECK. Mr. Knight, followup? No?

Mr. Coffman, followup?

Mr. COFFMAN. No.

Dr. HECK. Okay.

Well, again, I want to thank all of you for coming here today and showing us the value of the public-private partnership and some of the challenges and obstacles you may have faced in bringing your programs to camps, posts, bases, and how we can further help you as, you know, some of the premiere models out there expand across the Nation and provide more of these services to more of our transitioning troops. We appreciate your time and your testimony today.

And we will break and allow the flip of the panels, and then we will move into the next panel quickly.

[Recess.]

Dr. HECK. Okay. I would like to welcome our second panel to the dais.

We have with us Dr. Susan Kelly, Director of Transition to Veterans Program Office in the Office of the Secretary of Defense; Major General Burke Whitman, Director of Marine and Family

Programs Division, U.S. Marine Corps; Brigadier General James Iacocca, Adjutant General of the U.S. Army; Mr. Thomas Yavorski, Executive Director of the 21st Century Sailor Office, representing the Navy; and Mr. Horace Larry, Deputy Chief of Staff, Manpower and Personnel, for the U.S. Air Force.

Again, I would remind the witnesses, if you can, to please summarize your testimony to 3 minutes to your best of your ability so we can get into the questions.

And, with that, I will recognize Dr. Kelly.

STATEMENT OF DR. SUSAN KELLY, DIRECTOR, TRANSITION TO VETERANS PROGRAM OFFICE, OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Dr. KELLY. Good afternoon, Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished members of the subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to provide you an update on the Transition Assistance Program, TAP, and our united effort to support our transitioning service members.

Since the last time I testified before this subcommittee, the Department has fully implemented a redesigned TAP at 206 sites worldwide. There were four core components to this redesign: adopt Career Readiness Standards, CRS, which measures a service member's preparedness to depart from Active Duty; develop Transition GPS, a curriculum that builds the skills needed by service members to meet the CRS; a Capstone event, during which commanders verify their members have met Career Readiness Standards or, if not, ensure that they receive additional training or a warm handover; and implementation to the military lifecycle transition model, which aligns transition activities with touchpoints across the military career.

We have accomplished these core objectives, and the results are clear. The most recent participant assessment data show over 80 percent of respondents saying they gained valuable information and skills to plan their transition, that the training enhanced their confidence in their transition, they intended to use what they learned in the classes, and that they knew how to access appropriate resources post-separation.

Between October 2014 and August of 2015, over 150,000 service members separated from Active Duty. Based on data verified by the Defense Manpower Data Center, 94 percent of these eligible members met the VOW [Veteran Opportunity to Work] Act mandate. Eighty-eight percent either met Career Readiness Standards or received a warm handover.

These results indicate the commitment of the services and our partners to prepare members for civilian life. These partners include the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Education, the Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management.

This cooperation has been institutionalized through the TAP interagency governance structure, consisting of an assistant-secretary-level executive council and the SES [Senior Executive Service] and SES senior steering group. These bodies assess and modify TAP. And the services are fully engaged with the governance to influence the continued improvement of TAP.

Over the past 2 years, private and public organizations, as you have heard, companies, and Federal agencies have recognized that service members present an incredible pool of talent, and they seek increased opportunities to harness that talent. In collaboration with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's foundation Hiring Our Heroes, we have helped shape the environment in which employers gain early access to transitioning service members and their spouses.

In 2015, thousands of members attended 18 large-scale transition summits at installations in both the U.S. and overseas. The Departments of Energy, Agriculture, and Homeland Security are actively engaged in targeting service members for industry jobs.

And through the SkillBridge authority, under the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness, a growing number of members have developed skills for employment in high-demand industries.

My colleagues from the services can share more about the programs implemented at their installations.

There has been tremendous forward movement, but we must continue to work with Federal partners and the private sector to gather lessons learned, improve the curriculum, instill a culture of planning for post-military life, and developing pipelines into the national workforce.

That concludes my statement. I will be happy to take your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Kelly can be found in the Appendix on page 60.]

Dr. HECK. General Whitman.

STATEMENT OF MAJGEN BURKE WHITMAN, USMC, DIRECTOR, MARINE AND FAMILY PROGRAMS DIVISION, U.S. MARINE CORPS

General WHITMAN. Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished members, on behalf of the Marine Corps, I am grateful for the opportunity to give you an update on our Transition Readiness Program.

We call it "transition readiness" rather than "transition assistance" because it is an essential component of the overall readiness of our individual marines and their families.

We transition 30,000 marines out of the Marine Corps every year. Your marines are fighters. They are mostly young, and most plan to separate after just one or two tours, maybe 4 to 8 years of Active Duty service. So we don't wait until the end of their service to begin building their transition readiness. We begin shortly after the marine enters the Corps and continue throughout and even beyond the uniformed career.

We use a framework that we call the Marine for Life Cycle. There are three action points in that cycle—eight action points, excuse me, in that cycle. And at three of those, we require some specific activities to build transition readiness.

The first of these mandatory action points occurs when the marine arrives at the first permanent duty station, which is after boot camp, after follow-on combat training, and after their military occupational specialty school. Upon welcome aboard at that duty sta-

tion, they attend our Personal Readiness Seminar, which is required at that point. This establishes the foundation for the marine's journey through the Corps and highlights the available services throughout the Marine for Life Cycle, to include transition readiness, individual development plans, transition plans, and that kind of thing.

The second mandatory action point occurs at promotion. Before a marine gets promoted to corporal, she or he has to take a course we call Your Readiness. This provides them an update review of the services and resources available to them and the development of her or his individual transition plan.

And then the final mandatory action point occurs as the marine approaches separation and attends the Transition Readiness Seminar that Dr. Kelly talked about.

At the end of this is the Capstone, which, in our case, is an exit interview with the commander or designee to ensure readiness. That is a key moment. Transition Readiness is a commander's program, and we treat it as a commander's responsibility to make sure that the marine is ready or, instead, to conduct a warm handover.

In addition to these mandatory components, we do have the three track options for higher education, entrepreneurship, or career technical training. We also have a number of workshops, seminars, apprenticeship programs, and others that we may talk about during the questions.

Also, after departure, a marine is forever a member of Marine for Life Network, which is an organized element of our Marine for Life Cycle led by marines who maintain networks of job opportunities.

One quick example that I will close with. Major Kyle Aldrich, our Marine for Life representative in one particular geographical area, maintained a long-term active communication with a corporation that might someday hire. And, at one point, that person, his contact there, called him, said, "We've got a job opening. It's a hot fill." The major immediately gave him the résumé of a transitioning marine, and that marine just recently got the job.

As the area's Marine for Life representative, as part of that network, Major Aldrich's duty was to stay on top of those opportunities. That was his mission, and that is what he did.

We have a lot more to do, and we are working with the Department and the other services to try to improve our program, as well. And I look forward to answering your questions about that. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of General Whitman can be found in the Appendix on page 73.]

Dr. HECK. General Iacocca.

**STATEMENT OF BG JAMES IACOCCA, USA, ADJUTANT
GENERAL, U.S. ARMY**

General IACocca. Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of America's Army.

The United States Army is committed to ensuring the lifelong success of our soldiers as they transition to citizens and veterans in civilian society. Our responsibility is to inspire soldiers for life by providing essential counseling and training throughout a sol-

dier's career to ensure they are ready to succeed when they leave Active Duty.

The Army's Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program is a commander's program. The program facilitates a soldier's transition by ensuring they begin the process early and they visit the transition center often and ensures commanders provide encouragement and adequate time for soldiers to complete transition activities.

Today, the Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program serves approximately 110,000 soldiers annually. The program provides soldiers with the counseling, employment and education workshops, career tracks, and career skill opportunities required to achieve the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, commonly known as the VOW Act, and OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] policies. As a result, the program helps soldiers make informed career decisions, be competitive in the workforce, and continue to provide positive contributions to their community after completing their Active Duty service.

Currently, the Army is meeting the requirements of the VOW Act, with the Active Component at 89 percent, the National Guard at 75 percent, and the Army Reserve at 79 percent for fiscal year 2015.

In the last 5 years, we have increased our investment in the Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program and have grown from 54 to 75 centers worldwide and increased transition, financial, and educational counselors by 475 personnel, to a total of 700 counselors and staff.

Additionally, the Army established mobile training teams to support the National Guard and Army Reserve at home and at demobilization stations. To expand our reach, the Army created a 24/7 Virtual Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Center to meet the needs of all soldiers, including those deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. And we have TAP 21, an automated system that allows commanders to maintain visibility throughout the process.

Focusing on expanding soldiers' career options, the Army's Career Skills Program affords transitioning soldiers the opportunity to obtain industry-recognized credentials and to participate in first-class apprenticeships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, internships, and employment skills training up to 100 days prior to separation.

One of those programs is the United Association of Veterans in Piping, which provides internships in pipe welding and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. The program has a 98 percent retention rate, and more than 1,100 soldiers have received jobs through this program.

To conclude, I wish to thank all of you for your continued support. The Army is committed to being a leader of the Department of Defense transition efforts by preparing and connecting our soldiers and our veterans to career and education opportunities.

Chairman Heck and Ranking Member Davis and members of the subcommittee, I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you.

[The prepared statement of General Iacocca can be found in the Appendix on page 82.]

Dr. HECK. Mr. Yavorski.

**STATEMENT OF THOMAS YAVORSKI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
21ST CENTURY SAILOR OFFICE, U.S. NAVY**

Mr. YAVORSKI. Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to update you on Navy's Transition Assistance Program.

Nearly 4 years ago, the Veteran Employment Initiative Task Force was formed to develop and improve the Transition Assistance Program and the Transition GPS, or Goals, Plan, Success, curriculum. We implemented Transition GPS throughout the Navy in 2012 through 2014. We have also continued to improve classroom delivery by updating Transition GPS software, enhancing the WiFi capability for computers in every classroom, expanding our delivery approach to accommodate sailors in isolated locations, and adding classroom capacity.

Sailors leaving the Navy today have a far better transition experience than was previously available. They have far greater insight into the quality veteran benefits they have earned in recognition of their service. As part of the interagency transition assistance governance structure, the Navy continues to meet with the Defense Transition to Veterans Program Office, other service representatives, and our interagency partners to continuously assess and improve Transition GPS.

The transition military life cycle incorporates career readiness and transition preparation across a sailor's career, rather than waiting until they are separating. Aspects of Transition GPS are incorporated into the Navy Career Development Boards held at key points in the sailor's career.

Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online, or Navy COOL, helps sailors obtain civilian certifications and licenses for skills acquired during their service. Since its inception in October 2007, Navy COOL has provided over 130,000 certifications and licenses for over 41,000 sailors in every enlisted rating and pay grade.

Commanding officers are encouraged to authorize eligible sailors to pursue employment skills training through the Department of Defense SkillBridge initiative during their final 180 days of Active Duty. For example, the Navy is supporting the Solar Ready Vets pilot program in Norfolk in partnership with Tidewater Community College and the Department of Energy. The Navy continues to work with public and private organizations like zero8hundred to provide sailors additional transition assistance opportunities.

Each sailor who selflessly serves our Nation eventually separates or retires and, in doing so, has earned our unwavering commitment to provide them the tools that will position them for success as they transition and continue serving our Nation as honored and distinguished veterans.

I thank you for your steadfast support for all Navy sailors, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Yavorski can be found in the Appendix on page 89.]

Dr. HECK. Mr. Larry.

**STATEMENT OF HORACE LARRY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF AIR
FORCE SERVICES, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MAN-
POWER AND PERSONNEL, HEADQUARTERS U.S. AIR FORCE**

Mr. LARRY. Thank you, sir.

Chairman Heck and distinguished members of this subcommittee, I am pleased to testify before you today regarding transition assistance the Air Force provides to our Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve members and their families.

In 2012, we revamped our Transition Assistance Program with a major overhaul that embraced requirements outlined in the Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act and the Veterans Employment Initiative. We executed a partnership with the staff of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, our fellow armed services, the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Education, as well as the Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management.

Along the way, we teamed with industry leaders in orchestrating a type of revamped Transition Assistance Program that is delivering what our members need and want. Through our collaborative efforts, the Air Force has created a win-win situation where our airmen succeed as employees, students, or business owners and as productive members of the private sector while in transition from military service.

The Air Force is committed to furthering collaboration as we press forward in delivering the best transition assistance possible for our members and families. Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you, and I look forward to addressing any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Larry can be found in the Appendix on page 97.]

Dr. HECK. Again, thank you all very much for coming and participating today.

Dr. Kelly, in your testimony, you mentioned a TAP interagency organization. So is there representation from the private sector on that interagency group, such as entities like zero8hundred or American Dream U?

Dr. KELLY. The TAP interagency governance structure, both the executive council and the senior steering group, are made up of the Federal agencies as well as the services.

Dr. HECK. So, in your opinion, is there an opportunity or, I mean, would there be a benefit to have representation from the private sector, especially those entities that are looking to try to offer services to transitioning service members?

Dr. KELLY. I think if you give the services the opportunity to talk about all of their public-private partnerships that they are engaged in right now, you will find out that they are getting feedback from the program. But, also, I think we have evolved from just providing a Transition GPS curriculum and meeting Career Readiness Standards. It has been a tremendous learning experience over the last couple of years.

We were very much focused on unemployment of our veterans and resolving that issue and working with employers to resolve that issue. What we have learned is that employers are now com-

ing to us and saying, "This is a real talent pool, and we want early access to that."

But the other lesson that we have learned is that this is a community issue that is probably best addressed at the community level. You heard of the terrific success of zero8hundred. He talked about using the 2-1-1 directory for the community resources that are in that community. He talked about bringing in the employers, bringing in the installation commanders.

So he mobilized or that entire community mobilized their community resources and looked at the needs of that community and developed a solution. You see that going on in multiple places, which some of the installations are part of. You see those kinds of communities coming together and saying, how are we going to use what we have to either keep these service members here because they are a terrific talent pool for us, you see it going on in North Carolina, you see it going on in Washington State, you see it going on in California. But what is happening is that they are developing efforts to address the workforce skill gaps in those States and in those communities, and that becomes more meaningful.

Dr. HECK. So is there a process, a formal process, by which a program, let's say, like zero8hundred that has done extremely well in the San Diego area, is evaluated for potential implementation or recommendation to be used in other locations? I mean, if we find a private-sector program that seems to be working in one area, is there some formal process by which that is looked at to see whether or not it can be implemented elsewhere?

Dr. KELLY. Well, the Secretary of Defense then at the time, Secretary Hagel, provided guidance to the military departments, the Secretaries of the military departments, the Chiefs, and the Chairman and provided guidance, saying, look at allowing non-Federal entities onto the installations when they are providing support to our military members and our families.

There was very explicit guidance and templates, actually, on how to evaluate those entities, but left to the installation commanders and those communities to evaluate those programs, what was needed by the service members on those installations and those families, and how that fit into the community. So that authority still is retained by each one of the installation commanders.

And as we see this evolving, it seems to be the community-level efforts that have the most meaning. And if we look at it in the long term, we can build that economic prosperity for our States and our communities using the workforce skills of our transitioning service members. And I think we have to figure out and come to an agreement as to what are our long-term goals.

Dr. HECK. Great.

My second question will take longer than the 45 seconds I have left, so I will wait for the second round.

Mrs. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

I actually wanted to ask all of you to just respond to anything you heard in their presentations that could be problematic in terms of the services or what you would welcome.

I think, Dr. Kelly, you are suggesting that having the community engaged in the activities is very, very valuable. But I think it also

raises some questions about the capacity of our services to respond and, I guess, to be able to spend some valuable time interacting with them, as well, in order to make that effort go further.

How is that? What do you say to the organizations that are working hard in the communities? And does that say something about the fact that maybe you are not totally having a TAP program that works for the service members, as well?

Dr. KELLY. I am sorry, I am not quite clear on what the question is.

Mrs. DAVIS. I am just wondering about a reaction to what you heard and whether there are some instances in which perhaps they do get in the way, in some instances, or just the fact that you are trying to provide the authority for them to go on base becomes problematic in any community. How can they deal with that?

Dr. KELLY. Go ahead.

General WHITMAN. We do have to balance at each installation the opportunity. We are eager to have the engagements with partners, even with hiring partners, to the greatest extent that we can. We have to balance that at times with safety concerns, security concerns, just installation capacity concerns, which may mean sometimes we might want to move something off the base. It might not be quite as appealing.

Each installation is different. That is why it has made sense for us so far to let each installation determine how best to manage that. At Camp Lejeune, which is not close to a big urban area, we manage that pretty differently from the way we do at Camp Pendleton, California, which is very close to lots of urban, big hiring organizations.

And we also have to balance the goodness that comes from entering into these partnerships with ensuring that we do it legally and also fairly, in a way that doesn't give preferential treatment to someone that someone else may not like.

But we are doing it in a very robust fashion. You will hear from all of us, we are partnering heavily in every one of the installations, much more so than in the past.

General IACocca. Yes, ma'am. We, too, in the Army allow our installation commanders flexibility in the program. And we do have to maintain balance of who we allow on post. But, in many cases, as you heard, they have access to posts, and our soldiers are participating in their programs.

But one of the things that we are working through is to stress to our soldiers to go to transition early and often and not wait till they get to the end of their service when they are close to transition. And that would allow more time.

And many of our soldiers are starting to go earlier and go more often. And it makes the program easier to digest, rather than try to do it in a condensed 5-day program as they are getting ready to transition out.

Thank you.

Mrs. DAVIS. Right.

And anything that is different? I mean, if you find that you can work well with these organizations, that is great.

Mr. YAVORSKI. I would just like to address one of the issues that one of the gentlemen brought up about the PowerPoints, in that we

recognize that. And that is why we put the computers in all the classrooms, the WiFi. It is interactive.

They can bring their own computer in. We have computers for all of those—we talked about social media and LinkedIn through the VA. And every service member veteran gets 1 year of premium free LinkedIn membership. So we are stressing that and teaching that in our classes. So we are taking that on board.

Mrs. DAVIS. Great.

Mr. LARRY. In terms of access to the bases, we, the Air Force, take a similar approach. It is a balancing act, it most certainly is, with the force protection and the requirements of the base, et cetera. But the other part of that, we do look at opportunities to bring on specific agencies or organizations to see how they could team with us, as well. We don't have an overarching process where it says, here is where we go Air Force-wide, but we leave it to the individual installations.

So we take the GPS TAP program; here is where we start, here is how we have to finish, here are the outcomes we see. But within that, like at Eglin Base in Florida, look at the Boeing Company, we bring them on and say, we have some opportunities, and we will work with you. And we give the members specifics, as opposed to the job search overall.

So we do work to embrace the local communities in this process.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you.

Just going back to the Marines very quickly, and you talked about being a Marine for Life. In the other services, do you also work with organizations that work with the service member after they get out, specifically in your service?

General IACocca. I think, in the Army, if there is an issue with transition, we do the warm handover with the VA or the Department of Labor.

Mrs. DAVIS. With the VA. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. YAVORSKI. In the Navy, we don't have a "Sailor for Life," but we have a lot of those programs in our Fleet and Family Service Center and a warm handover and so forth.

Mr. LARRY. Similar with the Air Force, we don't have a codified program like the Marines, but we do the warm handover and validate that is done.

Dr. HECK. Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Can you tell me about, in the transition phase, the integration with the Department of Veterans Affairs? To what extent do they make themselves available, and how are they integrated into what you do?

Dr. KELLY. The VA's benefits briefings are a mandatory briefing. There are no exemptions for any of the service members. So that is 6 hours of face-to-face time with the benefits briefers. And there are follow-on one-on-one appointments after that.

So you have VA benefits briefings as part of the mandatory Transition GPS core curriculum. But VA also volunteered to build a curriculum for the career technical training track for those service members who want to use their Post-9/11 GI Bill to get certifications in the trades. And that course teaches them how to choose the best institution, get the most financial aid, choose the course

of study, and sets them up well to apply for those particular institutions.

So VA is very well integrated across the Transition GPS curriculum and on the installations.

Mr. COFFMAN. To what extent when members, because a lot of the members that leave tend to be, probably, disproportionately junior enlisted, junior officers. And so, to what extents are—and a lot of them have an inactive requirement but have no Active Reserve requirement.

To what extent do their respective services try to sell them on continuing their military service in the Active Reserves and also potentially getting another—are there opportunities to earn a different occupational specialty on their way out the door through a Reserve school to fit a unit requirement in whatever geographic area they are relocating to?

Dr. KELLY. Well, on the first point, one of the Career Readiness Standards is to go through the interview with the Reserve recruiter.

Mr. COFFMAN. Oh, great.

Dr. KELLY. So that is mandatory. We are realistic, in that we want to keep the best. So that is a Career Readiness Standard for all service members.

In reference to MOSs, I will let the services speak to that.

General WHITMAN. We do, we pursue that programmatic piece aggressively. And we do offer retraining in occupational skills based on the need at the time. We are constantly reassessing that, sometimes even with bonuses, to try to get the right people in the right place.

General IACOCCA. While in the transition phase, sir, there is not an opportunity to train them on a new MOS, but they do have opportunities to participate in a career skills program to gain new skills that they can use as they transition out of the Army.

Mr. COFFMAN. No, that would make absolute sense. But so, in other words, a lot of times you have Reserve units in their geographic area, there is not an MOS match with what they have, say, in the Army today and what that unit is in proximity to where they are going to live, and so that would require an MOS school. And so is that available?

General IACOCCA. Yes, sir, that is available. Once they transition, if they go into a Reserve unit where there may be a MOS mismatch at the time, they can go to school once they are in that Reserve unit.

Mr. COFFMAN. Okay, but let me phrase this differently. So they are in transition. They decide they do want to re-affiliate to another unit. They are talked to by the Reserve recruiter. So are there orders cut for them when they are leaving Active Duty to go to their school before they even report into the unit?

Quite frankly, that was an offer made to me when I was leaving the Marine Corps to the Marine Corps Reserves.

General IACOCCA. Sir, I will have to get back to you on that. I know that opportunity exists. I don't know if it happens—I don't know if they are issued their orders prior to leaving. But I will get back to you on that, sir.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 107.]

Dr. HECK. Mr. O'Rourke.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you.

And, Dr. Kelly, you may have covered this in your introductory remarks, and I am sorry I missed them. What is the total budget for the Transition Assistance Program?

Dr. KELLY. The Transition Assistance Program is not actually a line item. The activities are spread throughout many of the different activities within the military personnel system.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Do we have an idea of what it costs us to perform these activities?

Dr. KELLY. We are currently going through the process of publishing our DODI [Department of Defense Instruction] and publishing that on the Federal Register. And it is in the neighborhood of \$100 million per year.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Okay.

And then I know from reading some of the conclusions from the 2014 GAO [Government Accountability Office] report, there is the recommendation that we do a better job of measuring the effectiveness of the TAP program.

Dr. KELLY. Yes.

Mr. O'ROURKE. What are the measures that we would look at? Veterans' unemployment? Percentage who are connected with a job within so many months? What are the things that you will measure going forward?

Dr. KELLY. We actually have a TAP evaluation strategy that was requested by OMB [Office of Management and Budget] and was approved by OMB. It has three pieces to it.

One is to make sure that the program is implemented that meets the law and policy. So we monitor VOW compliance as well as Career Readiness Standards that are met by the service members; also, customer satisfaction. And we monitor that through the Participant Assessment Tool, an anonymous online tool, and provide the results of that at the installation level every quarter, so even commanders can monitor that at their own installation. And then, finally, looking at long-term outcomes.

For DOD, our input into the evaluation is our VOW compliance and our Career Readiness Standards. Our partners on the other side of the DD 214 [military discharge document] are looking at long-term outcomes—for instance, for Veterans Affairs, the use of the Post-9/11 GI bill, the successful use of that; persistence rate, the numbers who are actually completing courses; as well as a Small Business Administration for the entrepreneurship track, how many are still in business at certain periods of time; and then for the Department of Labor, also looking at unemployment.

Mr. O'ROURKE. So employment is part of that?

Dr. KELLY. Yes, it is. Yes, it is. But we are in the process of looking at even longer-term outcomes. And DOL is looking at a quasi-experimental design to look at some more results.

Mr. O'ROURKE. And did I understand that you are in the planning stage of defining those metrics? Or have you already published what those metrics will be and you are measuring and you will then publish the results the coming year?

Dr. KELLY. We have identified some of the measures. With some of the measures, we are identifying or tracking milestones, because it takes time to put the data collection process someplace, as well as the IT [information technology] infrastructure to capture the data, and to work through the PII [personally identifiable information] issues of data-sharing.

But we have milestones, and we are tracking those milestones. That is one of the purposes of the TAP interagency governance structure. And that is looked at every quarter.

Mr. O'ROURKE. And my last question. I appreciate my colleague asking about your effectiveness in working with the VA. I think one of the things that a separating service member is counseled on is their eligibility for health benefits within the VA. Tell me what the consequences are of poor performance within the VA on access to mental health.

We have an especially acute situation in El Paso. And I am hearing from recently separated service members who are living with PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], for example, that their inability to access health care, mental health care, is affecting their ability to pursue employment or, you know, have a quality of life that perhaps many of us take for granted.

Any thoughts on that?

Dr. KELLY. Well, certainly, Veterans Affairs is given 6 hours of face time with each transitioning service member to go through the VA benefits briefing. That is a mandate. There are no exemptions for that. That is tracked. That is one of the mandatory attendance and mandatory Career Readiness Standards.

But one of the basic tenets of the TAP redesign was to ensure that connectivity between the installation, wherever any service member is transitioning from, to the resources with VA, also the resources for DOL. So they are taught how to navigate the Web-based tools to identify the resources in their own communities and to connect to those staff members in their own communities to which they are relocating.

Past their transition out of Active Duty, that would have to be tracked by Veterans Affairs.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. HECK. Thank you.

Well, that bell signified the votes series, so we will forgo a second round of questions. My second question I will submit for the record.

Again, I want to thank all the witnesses on both panels for taking the time to be here and for hanging with us through our hour-long delay. I appreciate what you are doing for our service men and women as they prepare to take on their civilian second careers.

And until we see you at the next hearing, we will be adjourned. [Whereupon, at 5:00 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

OCTOBER 28, 2015

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

OCTOBER 28, 2015

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN HECK
TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM—A UNITY OF EFFORT
October 28, 2015

Good Afternoon. I welcome everyone to this hearing where our focus is the collaboration between the Department of Defense and private organizations to assist service members who are transitioning to civilian life.

We are all aware that the Army and the Marine Corps have begun downsizing, with the plan to reduce 40,000 soldiers and 2,000 Marines by 2018. Undoubtedly, such cuts put strain on our service members and their families. These reductions in end strengths represent additional service members that will be asked to leave the military on top of the over 165,000 service members that separate every year. We owe these transitioning service members and their families a robust system that prepares them for life after the military. We want to make sure they can continue to make the same caliber of contribution to society once they take their uniforms off that they made to our Nation's security while in uniform.

Today's hearing continues our commitment to ensuring that the Transition Assistance Program meets the needs of transitioning service members, not only through a whole of government approach, but also by partnering with organizations who share our commitment to help service members successfully transition from military service. I am interested to hear from our first panel how they connect with individuals who are leaving the military and what services they offer to assist. I am also interested to hear from DOD and the military services how they include organizations, such as those represented here today, in the Transition Assistance Program.

In response to the increasing need to help prepare individuals for post-service opportunities such as employment, higher education or entrepreneurial endeavors, Congress and DOD have continually worked to improve the Transition Assistance Program. I am interested to hear from our DOD and military service witnesses whether the recent changes have produced the desired results. For example, in your view, are service members transitioning today better prepared for post-service life as compared to those transitioning five years ago?

With that, I want to welcome our witnesses and I look forward to their testimony.

Before I introduce our first panel, let me offer Congresswoman Susan Davis from San Diego an opportunity to make her opening remarks.

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Susan Davis and distinguished members of the committee, it is truly an honor to be invited to testify in front of such an esteemed body. Thank you for the opportunity.

If we had to assure that every single veteran transitioning out of the military was able to extract every ounce of clarity & value from his or her experience, resume, drive, discipline, personality, and follow through, to have the best chance, to get the best job, how would we in this room, do that?

In the founding of American Dream U, I've had the opportunity to bring in over 140 world-class entrepreneurs and business leaders across eight installations including the Pentagon. They've shared their successes, failures, insights, tactics and strategies with active duty military, spouses, dependents and veterans. All this with zero cost to the Army, the Soldiers and spouses.

At a recent conference I attended, Robert Herjarvec, a "shark" on Shark Tank TV Show said:

"At the Army Ranger training camp, elite of the elite, I went for a week and got to spend some time with the guy who runs the training camp. You can't think of more highly disciplined, hard working, selfless people. Think about it, they make 27k per year, willing to put their life on the line for their country, they get 3-4 hours of sleep, they know discipline, they know leadership, all that stuff. Who could be better prepared for business? Those guys. I talked to the guy who runs the training camp and asked when these guys get out of the Army they must just kill it in business, there must be a list of guys from the Rangers that are super successful businessmen. Do you know what he said to me, it's extremely rare. Why do you think? Purpose, the biggest problem."

Robert's #1 criteria when investing in a business is the entrepreneur - not the idea or product. He instantly recognized that these soldiers have what it takes to start their own businesses and lead within organizations. Our 140 plus speakers and myself have witnessed the same thing. I ask then why aren't these incredible leaders who have world class training finding more purposeful work?

I'd like everyone in this room to look back, think, and connect the dots on how they got here. I would argue that it's the people you meet

and the books you read. Not the books you read in high school or college, the books that were recommended to you by friends and colleagues. Not the people you met in college or high school but at conferences, events or friend introductions.

What I've noticed is some negative talk surrounding becoming an entrepreneur or entrepreneurial thinking. These soldiers are getting pigeon holed into whatever their MOS was in the military for job opportunities during transitioning. From speaking to hundreds of soldiers, I'm not convinced this is the path to a successful transition.

I had an opportunity to speak to the economic folks at the VA. When the discussion of becoming an entrepreneur came up we heard, "96% of all businesses fail, we want them to have that degree cert on the wall for plan B". Does a general degree really carry weight in 2015? Only 51% of post 9/11 veterans who start college finish according to a Veteran students of America and Dept of Veterans affairs 2014 study. I understand there are underlying issues around PTSD and other reintegration challenges. I would argue many joined the military because college wasn't for them.

Dozens of soldiers at our conferences have asked this question, "We were trained since the first day of bootcamp that failure is not an option, it results in a teammate getting injured or killed. We've heard from all of your speakers that failure is ok and even encouraged. I'm struggling with this." I think the discussion during the transition needs to address this -- it's ok to failure in the civilian world. Everyone in this room has had several failures and that's ok, even valuable.

I think the people who run TAP are great, hard working people. I'm not confident they're open to ideas, up on the latest tactics and strategies, or emphasize the importance of finding your purpose, self-education, the value of networking and finding a great mentor. The days of submitting your resume to hundreds of companies and waiting for a response are totally ineffective. Those transitioning should spend more time connecting with people and talking to them about their experience, skills and what they're interested in. Why is this so important? Because at least 50% of jobs are found through referrals within the organizations, this represents 65% of all new hires. This is why LinkedIn and other sites are critically important. Talking to both soldiers and TAP leaders, less than 10

minutes is being spent on LinkedIn. Networking and public speaking are barely spoken about and I know Scott Mann is going to discuss the power of networking and telling your story. Having a day to bring in outside speakers, business leaders, entrepreneurs has been extremely valuable to those who have attended one of our events.

In 2015 and beyond, areas of focus need to be in the technology space, robotics, health care, finances and the sharing economy. Nano certificates, job apprenticeships and job shadowing need to be encouraged.

Twelve months before transitioning out of the military I think every Soldier, Marine, Airman, Sailor, Coast Guard Member and spouse should read *Starts With Why* by Simon Sinek, *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill and *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. Simon Sinek has been paid by several installations and has even spoken at the Pentagon. Simon and I met for coffee and he's willing to put together a specific workshop in partnership with American Dream U, at no cost, talking about purpose, something that I'm not sure is discussed at all during transition. ADU has several other leaders that talk on a similar subject willing to do the same.

In working with hundreds of business owners in my 20 plus year career as an entrepreneur, the number one hiring criteria is finding those that are flexible, resourceful, show initiative, work well with teams and show up on time. This defines the veteran. We owe our military to strive to do better.

Steve Sims, one of our speakers said it best, "I was amazed that while the soldiers we were meeting had no issue working with little information, were under-manned or with no details and yet still achieved their goal, yet when leaving the military they have fear in their eyes - this should not be the case EVER!!!! Making mistakes is discouraged in the military yet is commonplace in business, and this needs to be explained and have them open to failure occasionally".

It's an honor and privilege to work with our military and I'm constantly humbled in their presence.

Phil Randazzo

Mr. Phil Randazzo
Founder – American Dream U

Phil Randazzo is a second generation Sicilian who learned early on from his father that this country offers the greatest opportunities in the world. At a young age, he quickly learned the value of hard work. From busing tables at his father's restaurants to working three summer jobs from age fifteen until graduating college, to starting his first company at age twenty-four, Phil has never shied away from hard work.

His time is currently being spent writing, consulting, and developing a National Entrepreneurship and Coaching program called American Dream U, held at military bases around the country. American Dream U is a nonprofit organization that assists the military transitioning into civilian life. The program, taught by some of the world's best and most successful entrepreneurs, is designed to provide soldiers, airmen, sailors, marines, and coast guard personnel with the tools to obtain their dream jobs or start their own businesses.

Currently, Phil has ownership in and direct management of Text Safe Teens, LLC, a patented application that prevents teens from using their cell phones while driving and at school (www.DriveSafeMode.com). He owns interest in forty-four Subway Sandwich Stores, 35,000 square feet of Class "A" commercial office space, partnership interest in a 2,800-acre land development project in San Antonio, Texas, and interest in Source Intelligence, a compliance firm, tracking production of products across the planet, and he started CapitalMD, Inc, a medical billing and financial company.

Phil was given the key to the City of Las Vegas in March of 2003 by Mayor Oscar Goodman. He is actively involved in the Las Vegas community, serving on the Advisory Board for the YMCA of Southern Nevada and the Nevada Military Support Alliance. Recently, Mr. Randazzo was commissioned by Governor Brian Sandoval as a member of the Veterans Services Commission.

Phil attended Ball State University and received his MBA from University of Phoenix. He lives in Las Vegas with his wife of over twenty years, Jennifer, and his three college-age children, Philip, attending and playing basketball at Elmhurst College in Chicago, Megan, attending UCLA, and Joseph, attending and playing basketball at University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington.

**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Witness name: Philip Randazzo

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

☒ Individual

☐ Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented: AMERICAN DREAM U

Federal Contract or Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

2015

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2014

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2013

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

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2015

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
N/A			

2014

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
N/A			

2013

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
N/A			

Scott Mann's Opening Statement to Congress

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Susan Davis, and distinguished members of the committee.

Thank you for the honor of allowing me to testify before you today. And thank you for the opportunity to tell the transition story of our warriors who just don't seem to have a voice that is heard much these days.

I have spent my entire adult life in the U.S. Army Special Forces, also known as the *Green Berets*. If I learned anything from those 22 plus years of service in dark places, it's to attack the problem from the inside out...to go local, and immerse yourself in what's going on.

This unconventional approach provides uncanny fidelity on seemingly insurmountable problems. That "grass roots" perspective on the challenges and opportunities of military transition is what I'd like to provide all of you today.

Although retiring from active duty just under three years ago, I still train thousands of military and law enforcement in special skills. I speak to, and counsel scores of veterans on military transition. I see these folks every day in their normal jobs, and as they step away from the life of service that most of them know and love.

The other day I was talking to a Special Ops Master Sergeant (I'll call him Steve) who was going through transition from the Army. I hadn't seen him in a while so I asked him, "how things were going?" Do you know what he told me? He said that he'd rather go back to Afghanistan four more times than ever go through transition again? How is that possible?

Here is a man who has known more pain, suffered more family stress, endured more conflict, lost more friends, and seen more violence than any warrior I know of. Yet, he would go back and do it all again...four more times in fact, than ever go through the pain of transition again.

Something is wrong here. Something isn't working.

Master Sergeant Steve isn't alone. Every day, thousands of Veterans are going through the same dilemma as they struggle to return to civil society.

The challenges of transition are enormous. Our service men and women have been fighting a fourteen year war, the longest in our nation's history. In many cases, the same folks keep going back over for sustained tours. The corrosive arena of combat is placing unprecedented strain on our military and their families.

Now, let's add in sequestration and the drawdown. Our service men and women face a massive drawdown in a time when their operational tempo has never been higher. As ISIS and other extremist groups expand, this long war isn't going away anytime soon. As thousands of warriors leave the military over the next two years, the stress and operational tempo on those who remain in service will go even higher, leaving even less time for them to deal with transition when their time comes.

The fact is whether these warriors get out of the military unexpectedly, due to transition, or on a scheduled departure as I did, they will likely have fresh dust on their boots, gunpowder residue on their hands, and almost no time to even remotely contemplate the challenges of transition.

Add these tough military realities to a depressed economy and low job market, and no wonder our veterans are terrified of coming home.

That's the tough news. But, let's not forget that these warriors are high performers and complex problem solvers. This is not the island of misfit toys. Our warriors possess immense leadership skills that our society is demanding more and more every day. So, how do we bring them home and integrate them into communities that desperately need their leadership and loyalty.

I believe this is how history will judge all of us as leaders - whether or not our warriors walk home down a well-lit path, as they did after World War II, or a dark, lonely path as my uncle Jerry did after Vietnam.

Here is a little bit of that grass-roots feedback I promised you and that I hope I get the chance to expound on during this testimony: (1) This problem is going to get worse, before it gets better. (2) The current DOD and VA programs of veteran transition are simply inadequate for this massive undertaking. (3) The private sector is essential in bringing home our veterans to a life of honor and happiness.

All the transition efforts mean well, but the singular transition focus of just putting veterans in jobs after service is off base. While jobs are important, if we are going to bring our warriors home and benefit as a society from their amazing skillsets, we need a different approach.

- a. We must help Veterans reconnect to their higher purpose.
- b. We should connect veterans to relevant civilian players in the community.
- c. Let's build new teams: Build veteran-citizen teams to bridge the civil – military gap.
- d. Finally, we need to empower Veterans to tell their story early and often.

How do we do this? We need to tap into one of our greatest national treasures – our entrepreneurs, who are looking for ways to give back to our warriors. Private-public partnerships are the key. Organizations like Mr. Randazzo's American Dream U, which connects some of the country's best entrepreneurs to our military members while they are still on active duty is an excellent example.

Organizations like my non-profit, Mission America, also help service members understand the challenges and opportunities of transition in a no-nonsense, authentic way while they are still serving.

This isn't theory. It works. I've seen the impact of connecting our military heroes to leaders in our private sector. It's astounding. Let me give you an example.

One of my best friends and former soldiers, Romy Camargo, a career Special Operator was struck by a Taliban bullet 7 years ago, leaving him paralyzed from the shoulders down and ventilator dependent.

Doctors and skeptics told Romy and his amazing wife Gabriella that he would never leave the hospital or breathe on his own again.

Undaunted, he continued his recovery, left the hospital, and retired from active federal service to spend time with his wife and young son. But the story doesn't end there.

Romy and his wife Gaby, with a small 6-person advisory board of community leaders, raised 750,000 dollars in just over a year to open the Stay in Step Spinal Cord Rehabilitation Center in Tampa, Florida. This non-profit center just opened in June, but already provides unmatched and cutting edge spinal cord injury treatment in a family – oriented environment to dozens of patients in Tampa Bay, including several severely wounded veterans.

That is what transition looks like. That is the story we need to tell and the mission we need to pursue..all of us.

If the private sector can come together to help Romy and Gaby reach their dreams of coming home and giving back to their community, why we can't replicate this approach all over the country?

We need to change our perspective. We need to treat transition like a mission. The mission is to come home and lead our communities. History will judge us on this mission. This is our time - this is our mission -This is Mission America.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

SCOTT MANN

GREEN BERET AND AUTHOR OF MISSION AMERICA

SCOTT MANN IS A RETIRED GREEN BERET WHO HAS BEEN LEADING TRANSITION EFFORTS SINCE RETIRING FROM THE U.S. ARMY IN 2013.

Scott is an entrepreneur and leader in the private and non-profit sector. He has created a multi-million dollar real estate portfolio and regional property management company. He is also the President and Founder of a successful speaker, trainer, and coaching firm known as MannUp which brings Green Beret Leadership principles to the private sector.

Scott is an advocate for Veterans issues and non-profit efforts. He is founder and CEO of the non-profit Stability Institute, which helps lead efforts to defeat violent extremism. He is also the CEO and Founder of the non-profit Mission America, dedicated to helping America's Warriors return to civil society with honor and happiness.

In addition to working at strategic levels, Scott coaches and trains transitioning veterans from all walks of life at local levels on living into a life of purpose and passion that is equal to or great than their military service. Most recently, Scott served as chairman to the Stay in Step Recovery Center. This non-profit organization, founded by wounded warrior Romy Camargo, and his wife Gaby. Scott helped lead a fundraising campaign to raise over \$750,000 in just over a year to open a rehabilitation center that provides cutting edge therapy to spinal cord and traumatic brain injury patients.

Scott actively writes and builds content on the subject of transition. He has numerous blogs out on this topic, a video called Mission America that has gone viral on Facebook with over a million hits, a book entitled Next Ridgeline (Transition for Special Forces Warriors, and finally a book on military transition entitled Mission America.

Scott has spoken numerous times to large crowds on military transition at the CVA Defend Freedom Tour, military units and bases, and with the American Dream U non-profit organization dedicated to helping military members transition to civil society.

Scott's experience with military and transition affairs has landed him as a senior advisor to Concerned Veterans for America, military analyst on CNN, Bloomberg, Fox Business News, MSNBC, and regular commentator to Fox News Radio, Wall Street Journal Radio, Ringside Politics, and the Jim Bohannon Show. He has been featured in Forbes Magazine and His Op Eds have appeared in the Tampa Tribune, the Washington Post, and the Small Wars Journal.

To book Scott to speak at your next transition event, contact Stacey at (import from MannUp one sheet). You're invited to visit Scott's website at www.mannup.com and follow him on Facebook and twitter @dscottmann.

"Scott Mann's Game Changers" articulates a vision for America's role in the present and future world order." – Steven Pressfield, Military Historian and Best Selling Author of Gates of Fire

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Witness name: David S. Mann

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

☒ Individual

☐ Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented: _____

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Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
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zero8hundred Testimony to House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee

Sean Mahoney
October 28, 2015

Introduction

Chairman Heck, Ranking member Davis, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to speak about this important topic. I'd like to share my experience with a community initiative and partnership with military bases in San Diego that provides a community handoff from on-base transition classes to support service members and their families.

Background

Every year, approximately 20,000 service members stationed in San Diego County leave military service, and approximately 30% of them are expected to stay in the local community. Studies show that the post 9/11 transitioning population is one of great promise. Individuals are well trained, team oriented, and hardworking, but also in need of support. At a national level, we know that half of these veterans experience difficulty transitioning to civilian life. Challenges with transition affect not only the service members, but spouses and families as well, perhaps for many years to come. This points to the value of prevention and early intervention initiatives to support military transition.

San Diego community leaders realized that many organizations were available to assist transitioning families, but the gap between them and transitioning members who are often unaware of community resources was a significant challenge. These leaders developed a comprehensive community plan to close this gap without duplicating existing support services. The overarching goal of the plan was to link active duty military families to comprehensive wraparound services in the community during transition. This plan was called the Military Transition Support Project (MTSP), and implemented as **zero8hundred**. This name illustrates the promise that comes with a new day, and captures San Diego's resolve that it is time for a new approach to improve the transition experience.

zero8hundred was designed to coordinate the efforts of San Diego's sectors, including military, social services, public officials, businesses and philanthropy, and has been guided by our Operations Committee:

- San Diego Veterans Coalition *
- San Diego Military Family Collaborative *
- 2-1-1 San Diego *
- Congressman Scott Peters' Office
- San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce *
- San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation (EDC) *
- San Diego Military Advisory Council (SDMAC) *
- U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

County of San Diego Health and Human Services
 City of San Diego
 University of Southern California (USC) School of Social Work *
 Navy Region Southwest (CNRSW)
 Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD)
 Ronne Froman (Rear Admiral, USN, ret) *
 San Diego Grantmakers
 WebMD Health Foundation *
 Rancho Santa Fe Foundation
 * Denotes voting member of Governance Council

zero8hundred was implemented in January of 2015. Key elements of the design include:

1. **Use of a holistic Veterans Wellness Model** to ensure all aspects of wellness are addressed. This is done through **zero8hundred**'s four pillars: employment and education, physical and mental health, basic needs, and personal/social connections.
2. **Linkage to community based support prior to leaving the military.** A key aspect of the program is that **zero8hundred** is presented to service members on base at Navy and Coast Guard transition classes, and service members who are remaining in San Diego County have the opportunity to "opt into" the program by providing basic information about their background and concerns, and their consent to be contacted by a "peer Navigator" (case worker) who will offer one-on-one support and proactive check-ins from 9 months prior to 12 months after separation from the service. Members who opt-into the program become **zero8hundred** "VIPs" (Veterans and spouses in Process) and receive a call from a peer Navigator the week after their transition class, and then periodically until a year after separation to connect them to resources and opportunities to support a successful transition.

The partnership with local military bases began in 2013 with inclusion of Navy and Marine Corps representatives on the Operations Committee. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was established with Navy Region Southwest in late 2014 that allows the program to be presented by Navy-contracted instructors during the Transition Goals Plans Success (TGPS) classes. The MOU indicates MTSP's **zero8hundred** program will be presented on the first day of the course (with reminders throughout the rest of the week), and that **zero8hundred** will provide a central organizing point for regional community-based resources.

3. **Connection to veteran peer navigators.** The **zero8hundred** peer Navigators are at the heart of the model as they proactively check in with transitioning military families to help them navigate through systems, services, and benefits, providing needed support. Navigators are veterans or military spouses or dependents with a Master's of Social Work (MSW) Degree, or who are in a graduate-level MSW program. This criteria, along with their on-site training

ensures a high level of support. Navigators utilize case management software to track interaction and progress.

4. **Access to a comprehensive resource directory of social services and employment opportunities.** This project leverages the existing 211 San Diego database (the most comprehensive referral source for social services in the region). This is done through the **zero8hundred** web portal, a one-stop online platform for those transitioning into the San Diego community. Anyone can access this tool, and those who self-Navigate on the site have access to the same 6000 vetted resources that are available to the peer Navigators. Over 250 of these vetted organizations provide veteran-specific services (many of which are members of the San Diego Veteran's Coalition).
5. **Access through community based organizations: zero8hundred** enrollment is also available to transitioning service members who attend the Veteran's Association of North County's Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP). The majority of these students are transitioning from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. **zero8hundred** is also committed to offering the program to military spouses, and we have been working closely with the San Diego Military Family Collaborative (SDMFC) to achieve this goal. The program is regularly presented at the collaborative's *Military Transition: The Spouse Edition* classes.

Implementation

Pilot Phase: the first 2 years of the program are considered the pilot phase. The goal of this phase was to enroll 300 VIPs (clients), and to serve others who choose to self-Navigate to resources through the Portal (of course, support will be provided to VIPs who enroll after the initial 300).

Implementation Milestones:

- Completed Memorandum of Understanding with Navy Region SW in November 2014.
- Built staff of Executive Director, Lead Navigator, peer Navigators (originally three, now ten), Office Assistant, and Resource Development Consultant.
- Established Office at Point Loma Nazarene University.
- Developed web Portal in January 2015 (with assistance from 211 San Diego) that includes a case management system for Navigators.
- Developed TGPS presentation materials including a 7.5 minute video to explain the program. This video includes comments by San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer, Congressman Scott Peters, and **zero8hundred** Navigators. The TGPS materials also include a slide presentation to explain more details and how to opt-in online. This entire presentation and voluntary enrollment process was designed to take less than 30 minutes.
- Trained the 15 Navy-contracted TGPS instructors who make the **zero8hundred** presentations at TGPS classes to ensure consistency.
- Trained **zero8hundred** Navigators in resources available to transitioning members, and in aspects related to client interaction.
- Began in TGPS classes at Naval Base San Diego on January 26th 2015.

- Expanded to Naval Base Coronado on February 23rd 2015.
- Expanded to Coast Guard Sector San Diego on March 16th 2015.

Participation: this community handoff from TGPS has been very well received by service members. We achieved our pilot phase enrollment goal of 300 VIPs just over 8 months after implementation (nearly 16 months ahead of schedule). The following are participation numbers since the program began in late January 2015: 3681 service members and spouses have been briefed about the program at 89 on-base transition classes and 4 additional venues. 31% of these transitioning personnel planned to remain in San Diego. 345 members opted-into this voluntary program (over 30% of eligible personnel). Many also choose to self-Navigate to resources, and our transition portal has recorded 9427 sessions.

Transition Support: zero8hundred peer Navigators have been assisting the rapidly growing number of VIPs and linking them to community resources. Calls begin with an "Intake Call" immediately after the service member or spouse attends Transition GPS class to welcome them to the program. Subsequent "Assessment Calls" are scheduled as requested to determine what challenges the member or spouse are facing, and to offer options to help them overcome obstacles. VIPs are given warm referrals to organizations that can assist them, and the Navigator follows up with the VIP to determine whether their concerns were addressed. Primary transition concerns stated by VIPs are:

- Jobs 54%
- Education 27%
- Basic Needs (financial, housing, legal, food) 14%
- Health 3%
- Personal and Social Connections 2%

Secondary areas of concern:

- Education 30%
- Basic Needs (financial, housing, legal, food) 28%
- Jobs 22%
- Health 12%
- Personal and Social Connections 8%

The majority of our VIPs are considered Tier 1 or Tier 2, meaning they have routine challenges that can be addressed through self-navigation or by Navigators. Those with significant or recurring issues (i.e. mental or physical health, financial stressors, etc) are Tier 3 and may be referred to the Lead Navigator for assistance, case management, and referrals. Approximately 6-10% of our clients are Tier-3. Standard Operating Procedures and training are provided for working with VIPs under significant stress.

We have found that our VIPs respond very positively to the calls from their peer Navigator, and typically request much more frequent interaction than originally envisioned during the program's planning phase. Client narratives are being recorded. Two of our VIPs recently offered compelling perspectives:

- A Lieutenant Commander likened transition from the service to standing on a steep cliff and not being able to see the bottom. She said after she was contacted and assisted by a **zero8hundred** Navigator, she could see the bottom, then after several calls she could see steps and a way forward.
- Another VIP, a Second Class Petty Officer, stated that he was completely overwhelmed by transition and found himself dealing with the challenge by sitting in the dark. He was very concerned about the future and his small child. One day he was sitting in the dark at his home and received a call from a **zero8hundred** Navigator, who said he was there to help him transition. This completely changed his perspective. Working together, they found resources and opportunities to help this VIP succeed.

Evaluation: University of San Diego's Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research is conducting a third party evaluation to measure program outcomes. The evaluation design includes individual and programmatic data tracking to measure increased resiliency, reduced risk factors, improved connection to community resources, and achievement of transition goals. This evaluation is focused on the first 300 participants, and is being done through surveys given to VIPs after their first call with their Navigator, during terminal leave, and 12 months after separation. The Caster Center also developed monthly process reports that are provided by each **zero8hundred** staff member to document program development and allow replication. The Caster Center will periodically present their findings and will provide a final (two year) evaluation report.

Although it is too early to quantify results, anecdotal evidence from Navigator interaction with clients shows many have found the program to be very helpful in addressing their challenges and building confidence as they transition into the community.

Funding: **zero8hundred** is a fiscally-sponsored non-profit organization, and support is offered at no cost to the VIPs. This has been possible through the generous funding of many local and national foundations and corporations (please see our website for a list at zero8hundred.org).

Scaling: **zero8hundred** plans to expand access to the program through multiple venues at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton later this year. We have been growing to meet the high demand for the program in San Diego County. **zero8hundred** could be further expanded or replicated with adequate funding.

Closing

We are pleased with the progress of the program and the support it offers to transitioning military members and families. We value our positive partnership with the military bases in the San Diego area that has helped make this community support possible.

Thank you for inviting me and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. Sean Mahoney
Executive Director – Zero8hundred

Sean Mahoney has been the Executive Director of zero8hundred since September 2014. A native of Fishkill, New York, Sean Mahoney served 27 years in the United States Coast Guard, retiring as a Captain. He is a graduate of the US Coast Guard Academy, where he received a Bachelor of Science in Government. He served aboard the Coast Guard Cutter MORGENTHAU before attending US Navy Flight School and piloting helicopters in Cape Cod, MA, Astoria, OR, San Diego, CA and Houston TX. His operational tours also included assignment as an Exchange Officer to the Canadian Forces in British Columbia, and he accumulated 5000 flight hours over his career.

Sean completed the US Marine Corps Command and Staff College Distance Education Program in 2007 and was assigned as the Commanding Officer of Air Station Houston, Texas, where he directed aviation responses to multiple hurricanes. He served as the Director of Governmental and Public Relations for the Coast Guard's 40-state Atlantic Area, and was then assigned to the service's Mid-Atlantic region, where he oversaw crisis management across 6 states and the western Atlantic. Sean Mahoney served most recently as Captain of the Port of San Diego, and Commander of Coast Guard Sector San Diego, where he supervised 450 personnel and air and surface assets that completed missions across 22 counties. His personal awards include the Legion of Merit, four Meritorious Service Medals, and the Air Medal, and he has been personally recognized by the Mayor of Houston, the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, and the Air Force Association of Canada. Sean is enthusiastic about zero8hundred's mission to set transitioning members and their families up for success.

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Witness name: Sean M. Mahoney

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

☐ Individual

☒ Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented: MTSP's zero8hundred program

Federal Contract or Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

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N/A			

**STATEMENT
OF
DR. SUSAN KELLY
DIRECTOR
TRANSITION TO VETERANS PROGRAM OFFICE
OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND
READINESS
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE
ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
HEARING
ON THE
TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

OCTOBER 28, 2015

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the Department's Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

It has been more than two years since I last testified before this Subcommittee, and we have seen much change to TAP and progress in transition preparation. In 2012, with collaboration from Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA), Labor (DOL), Education, Small Business Administration (SBA), and Office of Personnel Management, we began redesigning TAP around four core objectives: adopting standards of career readiness for transitioning Service members; implementing a new TAP curriculum; implementing a Capstone event; and implementing a "Military Life Cycle" (MLC) transition model. Let me share with you the accomplishments achieved on these core objectives.

First, Career Readiness Standards (CRS) are at the foundation of TAP. CRS are a set of documented activities – such as counseling, coursework, and career planning – that demonstrate the Service member is prepared to pursue personal post-separation career goals. The desired end-state is for each Service member to meet CRS for his/her chosen civilian career path and to complete a viable Individual Transition Plan (ITP) prior to departure from active duty. The Services have successfully implemented CRS across the board.

Second, the Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success) curriculum is now delivered at 206 sites. In addition to the mandatory Benefits Briefings provided by VA and a mandatory Employment Workshop provided by DOL, the Transition GPS curriculum builds the skills needed by transitioning Service members to meet CRS. Service members may attend any of three supplemental tracks focused on specific post-separation goals: Accessing Higher Education (AHE), Career Technical Training, and Entrepreneurship.

The third core objective was the “Capstone” event, which all Service members complete in order to verify they have met CRS and have developed a viable ITP. Service members who have not met CRS receive either further training or a “warm handover” to an interagency partner for post-separation support. The Services have successfully adopted this practice.

The final core objective was the implementation of the MLC transition model. The MLC model is intended to align key transition preparation activities with pre-determined “touch points” across the Service member’s military career. The touchpoints are unique to each military Service. Today’s transitioning Service members are better prepared to transition to civilian life because of the continuing integration of this model.

While we have accomplished the four initial core objectives, we continue to work closely with the Services to gather lessons learned, improve the curriculum, and instill a culture of planning for post-military service throughout the Service member’s career.

Our agency partners deserve recognition in this endeavor. A very detailed Memorandum of Understanding outlines roles and responsibilities for the Department and our five interagency partners. It sets the stage for close coordination at every military installation in the United States and overseas. The interagency TAP Executive Council (EC), comprised of Assistant Secretary-level executives, monitors the execution, assessment, modification, and resourcing of TAP. The lead for this governance structure has, as planned, smoothly migrated from DoD in FY 2014, to DOL in 2015, and now to VA for 2016. Within DoD, the Transition to Veterans Program Office, under the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, oversees TAP and coordinates the year-round EC activities.

I am also pleased to note the great support we have received from the highest levels of the Department and military leadership. In 2014, then-Secretary Hagel signed memoranda

granting Non-Federal Entities, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), and Military Service Organizations (MSOs), access to installations to enable delivery of their support and services to military members and families. We are in the process of issuing a DoD Instruction asking the Military Secretaries to encourage their installation Commanders to grant VSOs and MSOs access to transition assistance-related events and activities. Also, in March 2015, then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dempsey issued a memorandum to Commanders at all levels about their role in TAP and cited actions Commanders should take to support transitioning Service members, including permitting them appropriate time and access to resources needed to meet CRS. The Chairman's memorandum underscored the unique role Commanders play in positioning Service members to succeed in their post-military civilian lives. These are two examples that transition support is "on the radar" of our most senior leaders.

I would like to share with you a few accomplishments in several key areas of our program.

EVALUATION

DoD, in collaboration with our interagency partners, has developed a comprehensive Interagency TAP Evaluation Strategy to address three overarching goals: (1) provide accountability to ensure the program is delivered on military installations in accordance with law, policy, and leadership intent; (2) measure and improve customer satisfaction; and (3) measure and improve program effectiveness. This strategy was approved by the Office of Management and Budget in May 2014. It uses a variety of rigorous program evaluation methodologies, such as the Transition GPS participant assessment, site visits, and performance measures. The suite of established performance measures begins with the VOW to Hire Heroes

Act and CRS compliance. Long-term outcome measures of the TAP are also a priority and include use of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill for completion of a college degree and new business formation rate for those interested in pursuing entrepreneurship. Additional long-term, outcome-oriented evaluations are also being developed by VA, DOL, and SBA to strengthen the interagency evaluation approach and ensure that the TAP is continuously improved.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

As stated, a mandate of the TAP evaluation strategy is performance measurement, beginning with VOW Act compliance and CRS requirements. Between October 2014 and August 2015, 151,680 Service members separated from active duty. Based on data verified by the Defense Manpower Data Center, 94.3 percent of eligible Service members met the VOW Act mandate. This mandate includes pre-separation counseling, VA Benefits briefings, and the DOL Employment Workshop. Eighty-eight percent of eligible Service members either met CRS or received a warm handover to appropriate partner agencies. These results indicate the incredible commitment of the Services and our partner agencies to prepare Service members for civilian life.

TRANSITION GPS PARTICIPANT ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The Transition GPS curriculum is currently taught in “brick-and-mortar” classrooms on military installations, as well as delivered virtually on Joint Knowledge Online. At the completion of each Transition GPS module, and again at the end of the entire program, each Service member is asked to complete a voluntary, anonymous online assessment. This assessment gathers Service member feedback on the effectiveness and value of Transition GPS,

the quality of the facilitators and learning resources, and the Service members' intent to apply their learning toward their transition preparation and confidence in their ability to do so.

The most recent participant assessment data (third quarter of FY 2015) shows 83 percent of respondents reporting that they gained valuable information and skills to plan their transition; 82 percent citing that the training enhanced their confidence in transition planning; 83 percent saying that they intended to use what they learned in transition planning; and 85 percent responding that they knew how to access appropriate resources.

Of the additional Transition GPS tracks, we have seen highest demand for the AHE course, which prepares Service members who plan on pursuing higher education after separation. As an example of feedback about the tracks, our participant assessment data shows us that 90 percent of respondents cited that the AHE track enhanced their confidence in transition planning; 92 percent said that they intended to use what they learned in transition planning; and 94 percent responded that the learning resources and materials were useful.

SITE VISITS

As with the implementation of any large-scale program redesign, especially one requiring a significant culture shift, the biggest challenge is effective communication to adopt changes and make them work. DoD has made a concerted effort with our partners to message change and solicit feedback from the field. We have interviewed Commanders, convened focus groups with Service members, staff, Senior Enlisted Advisors, and Commanders, and traveled as observation teams during Staff Assistance Visits (SAV). We actually doubled SAVs from 10 in 2014 to 21 in 2015.

We continue to see implementation of MLC transition preparation during these observations and forums. We have learned that Service members are aware of TAP workshops and are eager to participate. Those who have attended the workshops serve as “champions,” encouraging their peers to attend the Transition GPS modules and tracks.

Commanders at installations with high throughput of transitioning Service members are putting forth their best efforts to meet new, tough standards, such as the limit of 50 students per TAP class. At some installations, this might mean offering five or six Transition GPS classes a week, concurrently, at various locations across the installation. All of the installations we visited in FY 2015 had government laptops available for classroom use. At more and more sites, Wi-Fi enables Service members to use their own devices in the classroom. Our Navy colleagues make use of over 250,000 DVDs of the Transition GPS curriculum to gain skills while afloat.

The field’s input also conveyed a recurring lesson: Shared responsibility. The continued success of TAP will depend upon a high level of meaningful interaction between Commanders, the chain of command, their TAP staffs, and other staff such as installation Education Officers and Certified Personal Financial Counselors. Commanders must understand their responsibility to ensure that Service members meet CRS, and TAP staff plays an integral role in helping Commanders fulfill that responsibility. The TAP staff must embrace increased coordination, counseling, and training responsibilities, as well as their consultative role to Commanders in reviewing CRS in anticipation of “Capstone.” Most importantly, Service members need to understand their responsibility to meet CRS and the availability of TAP to maximize their own preparation for transition. The TAP Interagency EC will continue to support military leaders, TAP staff, and individual Service members so these new responsibilities can be fully met.

MEASURING CULTURE CHANGE

To monitor the culture change being driven by the TAP redesign, we are using the DoD Status of Forces Survey to capture Service members' attitudes toward post-military career planning and leadership support for such planning. This annual survey will enable us to gauge Service members' awareness of TAP and their individual transition responsibilities, as well as the support they receive from leadership and peers in preparing for transition. We have already seen implementation of the MLC transition preparation culture reflected in the survey. For example, of those responding to the 2014 survey, 62 percent indicated they had done some planning for their post-military career, 49 percent said Commanders or senior leadership were supportive of this career planning, and 65 percent indicated peer support. We will be monitoring these yearly results carefully.

CURRICULUM

Our Service members have access to the Transition GPS curriculum regardless of their duty station or location. We have converted all components of the "brick-and-mortar" classroom curriculum into a virtual curriculum hosted on DoD's Joint Knowledge Online. This means instruction for transition preparation is located on the same platform that Service members use for all joint computer-based training – a strong message that transition preparation is a *normal* part of military training. Since the virtual curriculum was launched in October 2013, more than 100,000 unique users have completed more than 700,000 online modules.

Additionally, in response to high levels of interest and feedback, and in alignment with the goals of the MLC model, we have created additional virtual curricula, including a module called "Higher Education Preparation." This module was developed to assist Service members

in making wise decisions for the use of tuition assistance. This curriculum is intended to help first-term Service members understand the importance of lifelong adult learning, how education should align with career success, how to compare institutions of higher learning to select the best educational match for the Service member, and how to effectively use tuition assistance to support educational goals.

The TAP Interagency EC has completed two review cycles of the Transition GPS curriculum, allowing for updates of resources, materials, and content. The reviews are based on feedback provided by Service members, facilitators, subject matter experts, interagency partners, and Service representatives. This annual review process allows DoD and our partners to provide the most current and effective instruction to support the career success of our Service members.

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Over the past two years, companies of all sizes, as well as federal agencies, have recognized that transitioning Service members comprise an incredible pool of talent and seek increased opportunities to harness that talent.

In collaboration with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Hiring Our Heroes Foundation, we have helped shape the environment in which employers gain early access to transitioning Service members. In 2015, thousands of Service members, Veterans, and spouses have attended over 100 Hiring Our Heroes events. These include 18 large-scale transition summits, including summits at overseas installations in Okinawa, mainland Japan, Germany, and Italy. In the last assessment (August 2015), 94 percent of attendees who responded to a survey indicated that they felt better prepared for transition after attending these events.

DoD has also partnered with federal agencies to both support transitioning Service members and fill workforce gaps. The Department of Labor (with their employer and labor partners) helps to ensure that transitioning Service members are able to connect with Registered Apprenticeships, and has taken steps with the VA to make it easy for veterans to gain access to their GI Bill during their apprenticeship. Currently, approximately 95,000 active Service members from the Marines, Navy, and Coast Guard are participating in apprenticeships through the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program – gaining valuable skills that translate to civilian occupations. The Department of Energy is launching initiatives to help Service members train for and obtain jobs in the utility industry. The Department of Agriculture has recently launched a targeted campaign to make Service members aware of opportunities in the agriculture industry. And the Department of Homeland Security has been actively engaged at hiring events to recruit transitioning Service members for law enforcement, border patrol, and national security positions. At the Honolulu Transition Summit, Customs and Border Protection accepted over 300 applications from Navy and Air Force personnel.

Private-sector employers have found innovative ways to employ transitioning Service members through the development of on-the-job training programs and registered apprenticeships authorized pursuant to SkillBridge, which is overseen by DoD's Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness. Service members meeting certain qualifications are allowed to participate in civilian job and employment training up to six months prior to their separation from Active Duty. Both industry and federal agencies are developing career pipelines for transitioning Service members; I will defer to my colleagues to discuss the SkillBridge programs implemented at their installations. We are eager to increase such pipelines through

America's Apprenticeship system, which aims to expand U.S. apprenticeships and make these training opportunities available to more workers and employers.

I can also report that we have made strong progress in information technology, research, and strategic communication that has improved how we manage and facilitate transition preparation. Examples are included with this testimony.

CONCLUSION

The Department's focus on transition assistance is being acknowledged across the Administration. In fact, many now recognize that preparing Service members for transition is imperative to sustaining the All-Volunteer Force. The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review noted that the strength of the All-Volunteer Force would be maintained by providing the best possible assistance to Service members transitioning to civilian life.

Our Service members are a vital component of our Nation's economic prosperity; their contributions last years beyond their military service. We are working hard to increase the awareness of the valuable skill sets that Service members can bring to every industry. We are encouraging employers to develop training, credentialing, and career paths that create viable and enduring post-service options for Service members.

I believe we will continue to see our Service members succeed more quickly in their post-separation goals, whether that is pursuing a degree in higher education, immediately entering the civilian workforce, or launching an entrepreneurial endeavor. I credit our interagency partners and the TAP staffs of the Military Services for making this happen. This has been an unprecedented effort. Our collective dedication has never wavered.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I thank you, the Ranking Member, and the members of this Subcommittee for your outstanding and continuing support of the men and women who proudly wear the uniform in defense of our great Nation.

Dr. Susan S. Kelly
Director, Transition to Veterans Program Office

Dr. Susan S. Kelly leads the Transition to Veterans Program Office (TVPO), which prepares Service members for a successful transition to civilian life. She has been instrumental in revitalizing the Department of Defense (DoD) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) that ensures Service members leaving Active Duty are provided with the information and training needed to effectively pursue their civilian career goals. As co-chair of the interagency TAP Senior Steering Group, Dr. Kelly collaborates with leaders from across the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Labor, Education, the Office of Personnel Management, and the Small Business Administration, ensuring that transition assistance is a coordinated, interagency effort with long-term sustainability and meets the needs of the nation's Service members.

Prior to joining TVPO, Dr. Kelly served as the Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief Management Officer (DCMO), leading DCMO's initial response when the Secretary of Defense directed that risk should be infused into the Department's decision making processes. Dr. Kelly also served as the Special Advisor to TAP in the Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness. In this role, she was responsible for TAP oversight and the development of transition assistance initiatives.

Dr. Kelly's first senior executive level position in the DoD was the Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management, Executive Secretariat for Joint Executive Council/Senior Oversight Committee for Wounded Ill and Injured. Prior to this she served in policy, strategic planning, and performance evaluation roles in the Department while assigned to the Pentagon. Dr. Kelly also served as the acting director of the Department of Defense Language Office (now the Defense Language and National Security Education Office) and co-authored the Department of Defense Language Transformation Roadmap.

She holds a doctorate in Marriage and Family (Education) from St. Louis University, a Masters of Arts in Education and Counseling from the University of Georgia, and a Bachelors of Arts in Social and Behavioral Science from the University of South Florida.

Dr. Kelly is a member of the Senior Executive Service and has been recognized with various awards and meritorious citations, including the Secretary of Defense Award of Excellence, the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service, and the United States Air Forces in Europe Commander's Award of Excellence.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
MAJOR GENERAL BURKE W. WHITMAN,
DIRECTOR, MARINE AND FAMILY PROGRAMS DIVISION
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
CONCERNING
TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – A UNITY OF EFFORT
ON
28 OCTOBER 2015

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished Members of the Committee, on behalf of the U.S. Marine Corps, thank you for holding this hearing and the opportunity to update you on our transition assistance efforts.

Each year approximately 30,000 Marines transition from your Marine Corps. It is our responsibility to ensure that all of our Marines and their families are prepared for success after leaving service. We begin providing Marines access to transition resources and programs shortly after entry into the Marine Corps and continue to do so throughout the duration of their service employing the Marine For Life Cycle (M4LC).

UPDATE ON MARINE CORPS TRANSITION READINESS PROGRAM

The Marine Corps Transition Readiness Program (TRP) prepares Marines for their transition from military to civilian life by providing the essential tools and resources, including those required by the Department of Defense (DoD). The TRP provides transition, career, and employment assistance to the total Marine force, as well as eligible family members. This assistance is available through the installation career services centers and online.

The Marine Corps begins developing Transition Readiness in every Marine well before he or she reaches the end of her or his uniformed service. Transition Readiness is a process that occurs over a period of time throughout a Marine's life cycle. In Fiscal Year 2015, we incorporated TRP into our M4LC concept that provides every Marine an awareness of the readiness preparations throughout a Marine's life cycle, from the beginning of his or her military service and at other key moments in the Marine's career. This lifecycle adds a framework to our

transition process. It provides Marines the opportunity to meet many of DoD's Career Readiness Standards (CRS) well in advance of attending the Transition Readiness Seminar.

There are three "action points" in the M4LC. First, the Marine attends a mandatory four hour "Personal Readiness Seminar" upon arrival at the Marine's first permanent duty station. We implemented the Personal Readiness Seminar in October 2014. The first hour of the seminar consists of:

- an overview of the Personal and Professional Development services available to the Marine and the family including Library Services, Family Member Employment Assistance, Voluntary Education, Personal Financial Management, Transition Readiness, and Information Referral
- an overview of eBenefits premium access
- completion of standardized personal assessment
- introduction of Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Crosswalk/Gap Analysis Curriculum
- introduction to United States Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP)
- overview of Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL)
- concept of developing an Individual Development Plan/Individual Transition Plan (IDP/ITP).

The remaining three hours of the seminar develops practical skills in personal financial management. Personal financial management training topics include banking and financial services, spending plans, credit management, car buying, and the importance of financial planning prior to deployment. The objective is to ensure Marines are financially sound while they serve in the Corps and after they transition to civilian life.

The second “action point” is our “Your Readiness” MarineNet training course, a mandatory component of preparation for promotion to the rank of Corporal (E-4). It provides a refresher of Personal and Professional Development services, plus an introduction to the reenlistment process, development of an actual ITP, and an introduction to all the resources and support that a Marine can access and use throughout the M4LC.

The final major “action point” of the M4LC is the Transition Readiness Seminar (TRS). It provides the mandatory transition requirements of the interagency Transition Goals Plan Success (GPS) program to include Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW), Department of Veterans Affairs’ Benefits Briefs I and II, MOS Crosswalk, Resilient Transitions, Financial Planning, ITP and Capstone Review. Marines are encouraged to attend TRS 12-14 months prior to separation or within 24 months of retirement, but must attend no later than 180 days prior to separation or retirement.

We expect all Marines to meet Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) Act compliance requirements and CRS established by the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) taskforce. A Marine can complete CRS at any time during the M4LC, not only at the TRS. The Marine Corps will continue to focus on VOW compliance, with emphasis on the Reserve Component throughout Fiscal Year 2016. During Fiscal Year 2015, 31,566 Marines attended TRS.

In January 2014, all Marine Corps installations began providing Marines with two day “Track Options” which provide hands-on, in-depth information aligned with the Marine’s future personal and professional objectives. Marines can access these outside of and in addition to the TRS and throughout the M4LC.

In addition to meeting the CRS requirements, transitioning Marines seeking employment or entrepreneurial opportunities must complete and submit a minimum of two job applications.

Marines seeking higher education or career technical training opportunities must complete a comparison of academic or training institutions, confirm one-on-one counseling with an advisor or counselor, complete a college, university or technical training application, or receive an acceptance letter

RESERVE COMPONENT

All transitioning Marines, including Reservists who serve for 180 continuous days or more on active duty, must meet VOW Act standards and complete transition readiness requirements. Reserve Component VOW compliance and Career Readiness Standard reporting significantly lags the Active Component. We are engaging with Commanders to reinforce the requirement and improve our statistics.

A Reserve Component Marine may be exempted from the DOLEW portion if the Marine can confirm employment, can provide documented acceptance into an accredited technical training or college degree program, or has previously attended the DOLEW. The Marine may have attended DOLEW while serving in the Active Component or while mobilized or activated as a Reservist.

Reserve Marines can access TRP at any military installation. The preferred method of delivery of transition services is face-to-face; however virtual training is also available. Commanding officers determine whether Marines are eligible for virtual delivery. Spouses of eligible Marines may also be eligible to take the virtual training.

CAPSTONE

The Marine Corps implemented the DoD mandated Capstone in October 2013. Capstone occurs no later than 90 days prior to separation or retirement, or as soon as possible within remaining Active Duty for eligible Reservists. Each Marine meets individually with her or his Commanding Officer (CO) or designee for the Capstone review. The CO validates that the Marine has (or has not) met all CRS and ensures the Marine's readiness for transition to civilian life. The CO or designee also reviews and completes DD Form 2958, Service Member Career Readiness Standards/ITP Checklist. In the event a Marine has struggled to meet CRS, the CO provides a "warm handover" to DoL or VA so that those Federal agencies can provide assistance after transition.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

In addition to meeting the transition requirements mandated by DoD, the Marine Corps offers a myriad of Personal and Professional Development programs, workshops and classes to Marines and their families during their M4LC. Personal and Professional Development services include career development, resume writing, job search strategies, personal financial management classes, credentialing, and educational opportunities. These types of opportunities are available at all Marine Corps installations.

Since spouses and other family members are also involved in transitioning from the Marine Corps, we make them an integral part of the transition planning process. In September 2014, the Marine Corps launched the Spouse Transition and Readiness (STARS) initiative. We created STARS to provide spouses with knowledge, information, and resources for transition readiness.

In August 2014, the Marine Corps, in conjunction with the Department of the Navy, launched Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL). COOL is a resource for understanding which civilian certification and license requirements relate to certain MOSs. We use COOL to advise Marines and recruits, and to help employers determine the qualifications of potential Marines as employees.

The DoD SkillBridge initiative promotes civilian job training available for transitioning Marines. Marines who meet certain qualifications can participate in civilian job and employment training, including apprenticeships and internships. The Marine Corps offers the following SkillBridge programs: Veterans In Piping, Department of Energy, Onward to Opportunity, and Microsoft Software & Systems Academy.

MARINE FOR LIFE PROGRAM

The Marine For Life Program is the embodiment of the Marine Corps' heritage of "Once a Marine, Always a Marine". It reinforces our tradition of "taking care of our own". The Marine For Life Program serves transitioning and transitioned Marines and their families by growing and sustaining a self-perpetuating, Marine-friendly network that informs recipients of available resources to include employment and educational opportunities. The objective of Marine For Life is to harness the collective skills, knowledge, experience, and personal and professional connections of the network to better assist transitioning Marines with the achievement of their life-long goals, while also offering employment organizations, educational institutions, and other human services resources the opportunity to network and build beneficial relationships with the Marines and their families.

CONCLUSION

Three years following DoD's redesign of TRP, your Marine Corps remains in compliance with the VOW Act. Our TRP provides our Marines and families with all of the mandatory elements to assist with their transitions. We also sustain a number of programs that go beyond the requirements. As our Marine Corps Transition Assistance Program evolves, we will continue to collaborate with DoD, the other military services, and our interagency partners to collect and assess data on performance indicators, ensure robust reviews of our program, and conduct installation staff assist visits to ensure uniform quality across your Corps. We are committed to helping your Marines and families successfully transition to a life outside the Marine Corps.

Thank you.

Major General Burke W. Whitman
Director, Marine and Family Programs Division

Major General Burke W. Whitman was reared in Atlanta where he graduated with honors from Lovett High School. He played rugby and earned a BA with honors on a work scholarship from Dartmouth College, an MBA from Harvard University, and a commission as an officer of Marines after graduate school.

As a Marine, he has commanded infantry and reconnaissance units at the platoon, company, battalion, and regiment levels; served as an operations officer at the battalion, brigade, division, and geographic combatant command levels; conducted combat operations in Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan; developed strategy at the Pentagon; and earned a Master of Strategic Studies degree from the Army War College.

A chronology of military assignments: Rifle Platoon Commander, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines; Aerial Observer; Mortar Platoon Commander; Company Executive Officer; Battalion Operations Officer; Task Force Eagle, Bosnia; Light Armored Company Commander; Civil Affairs Detachment Commander; Reconnaissance Company Commander; Division Operations Officer; Commanding Officer, 4th Reconnaissance Battalion, Iraq; Operations Officer, U.S. Central Command; Deputy Chief (Middle East), Joint Chiefs of Staff; Director, Afghan Forces, 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade, Afghanistan; Commanding Officer, 25th Marine Regiment, Africa; Member, Amphibious Capabilities Working Group & Ellis Group; Assistant Division Commander, 2d Marine Division; Deputy Commanding General (Mobilization), II Marine Expeditionary Force; and Director, Ministry of Interior Advisory Group, Afghanistan. Major General Whitman currently serves as the Director, Marine and Family Division, Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

As a civilian, he has served as CEO, CFO, and Board Member of multiple corporations, two traded on the New York Stock Exchange and listed in Fortune 500. He was named Best CEO and Best CFO in his Industry by Institutional Investor Magazine. He has served on the boards of the Federation of American Hospitals, Lovett School, Marine Corps University, and Toys for Tots Foundation; on the Founders Group of the National Museum of the Marine Corps; and on the Secretary of Defense Reserve Forces Policy Board.

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RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

BRIGADIER GENERAL JAMES T. IACocca
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

FIRST SESSION, 114TH CONGRESS

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – A UNITY OF EFFORT

OCTOBER 28, 2015

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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

**STATEMENT BY
BRIGADIER GENERAL JAMES T. IACOCCA**

Introduction

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, and Distinguished Members of this Committee-
Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of America's Army.

The United States Army is committed to ensuring the lifelong success of our Soldiers. We know that preparing our Soldiers for transition through the re-engineered Transition Assistance Program, and beginning the transition process early, provides the greatest opportunity for post-military success.

The Army continues its commitment to support Soldiers throughout the military life-cycle and capitalizes on a Soldiers' training and professional development timeline. Our responsibility is to inspire "Soldiers for Life" by providing essential counseling and training throughout Soldiers' careers to ensure they are ready to succeed as they transition to citizens and Veterans in civilian society.

Strategic Overview

The Army began re-engineering the transition process five years ago by directing the United States Military Academy to provide a holistic assessment of the transition process in place at that time - The Army Career and Alumni Program. Results of this study laid the foundation for the Army's current Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program. The primary objectives that facilitate a Soldier's successful transition are beginning the transition process early, visiting the transition center often, and ensuring commanders provide encouragement and adequate time for Soldiers to attend and complete transition activities. Therefore, the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program is a "commanders' program", enforcing and empowering Commanders to support their Soldiers during the transition process.

The current program incorporates these guiding principles and complies with the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW Act) and Defense Department policies. The Army participates at every echelon from the action officer, to the program director, to the GO/SES level in discussions concerning transition policy and resources across the services and interagency level in order to focus our transition efforts in assisting Soldiers. Installations engage all levels of garrison leadership and community stakeholders at quarterly transition council meetings. To ensure the unity of effort across the Army's program - the Army G1 oversees policy and reporting, while Installation Management Command oversees the execution of the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program and Career Skills Programs. Commanders and all components enforce transition standards in accordance to policy. The Army will soon publish the first Army regulation that covers all aspects of transition assistance, and includes tasks throughout the Soldiers' lifecycle that will prepare him or her for eventual transition off active duty.

Today, the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program is a fully comprehensive transition program servicing approximately 110,000 Soldiers annually (117,000 in Fiscal Year 2016 and 105,000 in Fiscal Year 2017). The Soldier for Life - Transition Assistance Program provides Soldiers with the counseling, employment and education workshops, career tracks, and career skills opportunities required to achieve the VOW Act and career readiness standards mandates. As a result, it assists Soldiers to make informed career decisions, be competitive in the workforce, and to continue to provide positive contributions to their community after completing their active-duty military service.

In the last five years, the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program has grown from 54 to 75 centers worldwide, and from 225 to 700 transition, financial, and education counselors and staff. The program added a center in Kuwait, and established mobile transition teams to support the National Guard and Army Reserve at home and at demobilization stations. Additionally, the Army created a 24/7 Virtual Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program Center to meet the needs of remotely located Soldiers, those deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and for any Soldier that needed to receive transition services telephonically or virtually.

In order to demonstrate Soldier progress and compliance in the Army's transition program, the Army developed its own automated system of record, TAP XXI, with dynamic reporting features capturing Soldier transition activities. The system's Detailed Commander Reports are distributed monthly to company-level commanders and above. The Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program reporting mechanism encourages Commanders to assist Soldiers in career goal development during their transition process and reinforces the importance for Soldiers to reach their individual transition goals.

Army Career Skills Program

The Army's Career Skills Program under the Department of Defense SkillBridge program, which is overseen by DoD's Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness, affords transitioning Soldiers the opportunity to obtain industry-recognized credentials, the opportunity to participate in first-class apprenticeships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, and employment skills training up to 180 days prior to separation from the Army. The Army uses Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) as the single source solution to navigate credentialing opportunities.

In Fiscal Year 2014, the Army coordinated Career Skills Program events for more than 800 Soldiers at multiple installations. The Career Skills Program continues to grow, and in Fiscal Year 2015 more than 1200 Soldiers participated in Army sponsored events at multiple installations.

By developing partnerships with supporting industry, successful Career Skills Program training events are being expanded to offer Soldiers increased credentialing opportunities. For example, The United Association of Veterans in Piping (UAVIP) program provides training in the fields of pipe welding and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC).

Veterans In Piping is an 18-week full-time training program and, upon successful completion, Soldiers are placed as a second year apprentice in a five year

apprenticeship program with guaranteed job placement. Since its first pilot three years ago at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the highly successful program boasts a 98% retention rate and more than 1,100 Soldiers have received jobs through the program. Forts Carson, Hood, Campbell, and Sill also have successfully executed the UAVIP career skill program with Fort Stewart starting its program mid Fiscal Year 2016.

Another successful Career Skills Program is the Veterans Education Training and Transition (VET2) with Georgia Institute of Technology at Fort Stewart, Georgia. After a success pilot program in March 2015, Fort Stewart expanded the VET2 Career Skills Program and completed additional classes with two more scheduled for later this year. The VET2 program consists of one week of classroom training, followed by a three week internship with a participating sponsor. Current sponsors include Gulfstream, Coca Cola, Polcase Ammo, Presidio, and Red River IT. The program is designed for transitioning Soldiers to attend training customized to the corporate sponsor, and receive job experience through internships for positions that are currently available. The program is offered at no cost for Soldiers and has achieved a 100% job placement rate.

Army Transition Research Findings

Recently, the Army implemented an iterative feedback system from Soldiers at the beginning of their transition process, the end of their transition process, and three to six months after they have transitioned from active duty.

From this feedback, we have learned that many younger Soldiers have an unrealistic expectation of civilian salaries and that most do not want to continue in their current military skills as a civilian. Additionally, we have learned the breakout numbers of career and education interests of Soldiers. This type of detailed data allows us to focus our resources on the most “at-risk” Soldiers and will help us shape future initiatives within the Soldier for Life – Transition Assistance Program.

Army Transition Compliance

The Army is meeting the requirements of the VOW Act with Active Component at 90% compliance through third quarter Fiscal Year 2015. Compliance for Fiscal Year 2014 Active Component was 83%, an 18% increase from Fiscal Year 2013.

In addition to the VOW Act, we are also supporting the Office of the Secretary of Defense's policy on transition assistance. For example in Fiscal Year 2015 (through the third quarter), 87% of transitioning active component Soldiers completed the job application package consisting of a resume of choice, references, and submission of two job applications, and 89% have a 12-month post-transition budget.

Army Inspector General Inspection of Transition Assistance Program

Another key point the Army emphasizes is its commitment to the continuous improvement of the Solder for Life – Transition Assistance Program. As a result of this pledge, the Army Inspector General is currently engaged at installations world-wide, evaluating the program's effectiveness.

Conclusion

The Army continues to invest a tremendous amount of resources and deliberate planning to preserve the quality of the All-Volunteer Force. We are committed to ensuring the Soldiers who have sacrificed so much in service to America's defense are taken care of as they begin the next chapter of their lives.

To conclude, I wish to thank all of you for your continued support. The Army is committed to being the leader of the Department of Defense transition efforts by preparing and connecting our Soldiers and our Veterans to career and education opportunities. Chairman Heck, and members of the sub-committee, I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you, and I look forward to your questions.

Brigadier General James T. Iacocca
The 60th Adjutant General of the U.S. Army and
Executive Director of the Military Postal Service Agency

Brigadier General James T. Iacocca graduated from Muhlenberg College and was commissioned in the Adjutant General Corps through the Lehigh University ROTC program in 1988. His first assignment was with the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, where he served as the Assistant Readiness Officer, G1 Plans Officer, Replacement Detachment Commander and Division Readiness Officer. He deployed with the division to Operation Desert Shield and Hurricane Andrew Disaster Relief in South Florida.

After the Adjutant General Advanced Course, General Iacocca remained at the AG School as a Small Group Instructor and Senior Team Leader. Following this assignment, he was assigned as the Battalion Adjutant to 3rd Battalion, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, GA.

Following Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS, he was assigned as the Brigade S3 for 8th Personnel Command at Camp Coiner, Korea. He was then assigned as the Adjutant and Headquarters Troop Commander for 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment – Delta (Airborne) at Fort Bragg. He was later assigned as the G1/AG for the 82nd Airborne Division. He has deployed for both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In June 2004, General Iacocca took command of the 82nd Paratrooper Support Battalion, and oversaw its transition to become the 4th Brigade Special Troops Battalion for the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment. After battalion command, he was assigned to Army Human Resources Command in Alexandria, VA, where he served as the Chief of the Department of the Army Secretariat for Promotions and Selections. He then attended the U.S. Army War College before assuming command of the 3rd Recruiting Brigade at Fort Knox, KY, in August 2008. Following brigade command he was assigned to the Joint Staff at the Pentagon, where he served as the Special Assistant to the Director of the Joint Staff for General and Flag Officer Matters. While there, he also served as the Executive Assistant to the Director of the Joint Staff. In June 2013, he returned to Recruiting Command to serve as the Deputy Commanding General. In March, 2015, he became the 60th Adjutant General of the U.S. Army.

General Iacocca's awards and decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with five Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Master Parachutist Badge, the Joint Staff Identification Badge and the Recruiter Badge. He has Master's Degrees in Human Resource Development from Webster University and in Strategic Studies from the Army War College.

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RELEASED BY THE HOUSE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

MR. THOMAS YAVORSKI

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NAVY 21st CENTURY SAILOR OFFICE

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

OF THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

OCTOBER 28, 2015

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL
RELEASED BY THE HOUSE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Introduction

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished members of this subcommittee, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify about the Navy Transition Assistance Program (TAP), and our efforts to seamlessly transition Sailors to civilian life, and employment, and which may include further education for some individuals.

In fiscal year 2015, approximately 35,000 Sailors transitioned out of the Navy, and these numbers are likely to be sustained over the next several years. Navy is an expeditionary force that routinely deploys. Our Sailors serve in diverse career fields, among them Navy Special Warfare, air traffic control, health care, advanced electronics and nuclear field. Civilian employers routinely pursue Sailors as potential employees because of the world-class training and skills they obtain in the Navy, even as we offer incentives to retain these Sailors, who possess critical skills, to ensure fleet readiness. But, for Sailors who separate or retire from the Navy, we offer a robust TAP to help them make a seamless transition to life beyond the Navy.

Navy Transition Assistance Program

Sailors are encouraged to begin the transition process approximately 24-months, but no later than 12-months, prior to separation. During this period, each transitioning Sailor participates in mandatory pre-separation counseling (10 U.S. Code §1142) that introduces them to the various programs and services available to assist them. Sailors complete a checklist to document counseling received, as well as requests for additional services and briefings, so they may be referred based upon their individual needs.

Navy provides the five-day *Transition Goals, Plans, Success (GPS)* Workshop at installations world-wide, via Fleet and Family Support Programs. Depending on the installation population, *Transition GPS* Workshops may be tailored for separation, involuntary separation, retirement, or rank. Frequency of classes is also dependent upon installation population. Additionally, upon request, Fleet and Family Support counselors provide individual transition counseling, résumé-writing and other transition-related workshops.

Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers also conduct first-term and mid-career workshops through the Career Options and Navy Skills Evaluation Program (CONSEP). These four-day courses are designed to assist active duty service members in achieving Navy, and future civilian, career goals. Training topics provide vital information on career-making decisions, upward mobility, college and certification opportunities, apprenticeships, as well as financial management and investment strategies, which enhance the Sailor's ability to achieve personal and professional success.

Re-Designed Transition Assistance Program

In collaboration with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Small Business Administration, and the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Education; Navy implemented a re-designed Transition Assistance Program, which includes the following elements:

1) **Career Readiness Standards (CRS)** – A set of common, discreet, and measurable, transition “readiness” standards for Sailors to meet prior to separation. The desired end-state is for each Sailor to meet CRS for his/her chosen civilian career path and to complete a viable Individual Transition Plan (ITP) prior to departure from active duty. These standards are designed to increase each Sailor’s abilities to successfully overcome any challenges that may be faced in pursuit of choosing a career path.

2) **Transition Goals, Plan, Success (GPS) Curriculum** – A series of training that includes the Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DoLEW), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits Briefings, Financial Education, Military Occupational Code Crosswalk, Family/Special Issues, and an ITP review. Additionally, participants may select from two-day training tracks in Accessing Higher Education, Entrepreneurship, or Technical Training.

3) **Military Life Cycle** – Incorporates preparation for Sailors’ career transition throughout their military service – from accession through transition from the Navy and reintegration into civilian life. Today’s transitioning Sailors are better prepared to transition to civilian life because of the continuing integration of this model.

4) **CAPSTONE Event** – A forum provided for Service members to validate CRS are met, and to refer members, as needed, for additional training prior to separation or retirement.

Navy officials continue to meet regularly with representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the other Uniformed Services, and interagency partners, to evaluate and improve the Transition Assistance Program.

Navy Transition Assistance Core Workshop Curriculum

The mandatory Navy *Transition GPS* Core Workshop is a five-day curriculum. On day one, Navy transition staff covers the following topics:

1) **Transition Assistance Overview:** includes a Welcome Address / Workshop Schedule of Activities, Topics for Family Considerations/Special Issues, the Value of a Mentor, and a review of available Fleet and Family Support services.

2) **Military Occupational Code (MOC) Crosswalk:** Upon completing the MOC Crosswalk module, Sailors are provided documentation of their military career experience and skills; translation of their military occupation experience to civilian sector skills; and identification of gaps in their training and/or experience that need to be filled to meet their personal career goals. The MOC Crosswalk enables Sailors to develop a clear line-of-sight between their military skills and training and career fields of their choice.

3) **Financial Planning:** The financial planning seminar prepares Sailors to build an integrated 12-month budget that reflects post-military employment, education, or training goals. Instructors and financial planning staff are available for follow-up counseling, if requested by the Service member.

On days two through four, the Department of Labor (DOL) delivers the approved Employment Workshop, while on day five, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) conducts a VA Benefits briefing, and Sailors review progress on their Individual Transition Plans.

Navy continues to improve our classroom delivery experience. In fiscal year 2015, we updated the *Transition GPS* computer software and enhanced WiFi capability, greatly improving the classroom experience. In fiscal year 2016, one-year ahead of schedule, we will replace all 2,493 *Transition GPS* computers with updated models, which will run faster and have extended battery life. Along with the computer refresh, all information-technology equipment will be updated to include WiFi capacity, routers, scanners, printers, and associated equipment. This upgrade will ensure Sailors have a real-time resource in the classroom to research job, education, and other transition-related opportunities.

In fiscal year 2015, additional classroom capacity was added in Navy's Northwest Region to accommodate an additional aircraft carrier homeported in the Region for long-term maintenance. We continue to expand and adjust our delivery approach to accommodate Sailors in isolated locations by delivering, in coordination and cooperation with VA and DoL, in-person *Transition GPS* classes in Souda Bay, Crete. We are exploring the delivery of limited in-person *Transition GPS* classes at Navy's newest and most remote bases, in Romania and Poland, in fiscal year 2016.

Education, Technical Training and Entrepreneur Workshops

In addition to completing the *Transition GPS* Core Curriculum, transitioning Sailors may also participate in a series of two-day tailored tracks available within the *Transition GPS* curriculum, which includes:

- (1) an Accessing Higher Education track, for those pursuing an advanced education degree;
- (2) a Technical Training track, for those seeking job-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials in shorter-term training programs; and
- (3) an Entrepreneurship track, for those who may wish to start a business.

Navy CAPSTONE Event

Ninety days before separating from the Navy, Sailors participate in a Navy-hosted *CAPSTONE Event*, to validate the process, and to verify that they have completed the *Transition GPS* curriculum and achieved Career Readiness Standards. Staff also reviews potential challenges Sailors may face as a veteran, and reviews available tools and resources transitioning Sailors learned about in *Transition GPS* workshops. Sailors requiring additional assistance are referred to supplemental training opportunities. Additionally, through the *CAPSTONE Event*, all Sailors are offered a 'warm handoff' to appropriate government agencies, and organizations that will provide them with continued benefits, services, and support in their new capacity as Navy veterans, including completion of CRS, if they are not fully accomplished prior to separation.

While beneficial for all transitioning Sailors, this is particularly instrumental in supporting at-risk Sailors, such as those subject to rapid or involuntary separation.

Military Life Cycle Transition Model

The new transition program incorporates career readiness and transition preparation into the entire continuum of a Sailor's career. In the past, transition and preparation for the civilian workforce occurred late in a Sailor's military service – just prior to separation. Under this enhanced program, these concepts are incorporated earlier to ensure that counseling, assessments, and access to resources that build skills or establish credentials, occur earlier in a Sailor's military tenure.

Navy leverages the Navy Retention and Career Development program, designed to improve Sailors' ability to achieve their professional goals, to facilitate the military life cycle. Individual Career Development Plans are created based upon Career Roadmaps for each enlisted rating, with assistance from Navy Command Career Counselors. Rating Roadmaps include information on skill training, job description, personal and professional development, Career Development Boards, Navy qualifications and certifications, civilian occupations, Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-line (Navy COOL), U.S. Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP), Professional Military Education (PME), and Voluntary Education.

Navy incorporates aspects of the *Transition GPS* curriculum into our Career Development Boards, which are routinely held during key points in a Sailor's career. Aligning these key activities with pre-determined "touch points" facilitates individualized attention, together with instruction, resources and services, to build the skills necessary for each Sailor to meet their professional goals throughout their military career and beyond. Additionally, imbedding touch points across the military lifecycle is particularly helpful in addressing at-risk Sailors who may require a higher level of support in meeting their goals. For example, we ensure that Sailors:

- (1) are registered for, and know about, eBenefits, a joint VA/DoD web portal that provides resources and self-service capabilities to veterans, service-members, and their families to research, access and manage their VA and military benefits and personal information;
- (2) are informed about VA benefits for which they are eligible while serving on active duty, as well as after they depart the service as Navy veterans; and
- (3) understand the importance of maintaining their personnel records, and obtaining credentials and certifications they have earned for skills obtained while serving in the Navy.

The Career Development Program is a key component of transition. Essentially, a Sailor's Individual Career Development plan becomes their Individual Career Transition Plan.

Education and Credentialing Opportunities

While serving on active duty, Sailors are encouraged to take advantage of programs that acknowledge military training and experience. Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-line (COOL) supports Navy's career development and transition programs by helping Sailors gain civilian certifications and licenses for skills acquired during their service. This helps translate each Sailor's military training and experience into concrete documentation that prospective employers can easily recognize, and which demonstrates that a Sailor's skills are commensurate with, or exceed, those of their civilian counterparts. At least one certification is currently available in each of the 81 Navy enlisted ratings, as well as collateral duty and leadership occupations. Since program inception in October 2007, Navy COOL has provided support to over 130,000 certifications & licenses for over 41,000 Sailors in every enlisted rating and pay grade. Navy also participates in the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP), which is a formal military training program that provides Sailors the opportunity to improve their job skills and to complete civilian apprenticeship requirements while on active duty.

In addition to the aforementioned programs, Navy funds educational opportunities that enhance post-military job-ready skills through the highly-valued Tuition Assistance Program, and encourages transitioning service members to take full advantage of their GI Bill and other education benefits while serving on active duty. Many Sailors are already enrolled in college, and some have already earned college degrees. Those interested in pursuing their education goals are strongly encouraged to attend the specialized Accessing Higher Education or Career and Technical Training track. Specifically, Sailors are briefed on these tracks during *Transition GPS* workshop, and required Pre-separation Counseling.

Employment Skills Training

Navy encourages commanders, commanding officers and officers-in-charge, when operational commitments permit, to authorize eligible Sailors to pursue employment skills training during their final 180 days of active duty service using the Department of Defense *SkillBridge* initiative (<http://www.dodskillbridge.com/>). *SkillBridge*, which is overseen by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness, allows participating businesses and other training providers to gain early access to highly-skilled service members as prospective employees before they become veterans. For example, Navy is currently supporting the Solar Ready Vets pilot program in Norfolk, Virginia. This intensive 6-week program, delivered through a partnership with Tidewater Community College and the Department of Energy, is preparing Sailors for post-military careers in the fast growing solar energy industry, while Navy gains valuable insights partnering with employment skills-training providers. Lessons learned from this pilot program will help Navy better collaborate with companies and training providers that have established SkillBridge training programs on, or near, Navy installations.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you the Navy Transition Assistance Program and our continuous efforts to improve support for transitioning Navy veterans, in close and cooperative collaboration with interagency partners. Each Sailor who selflessly serves our Nation in the all-volunteer force eventually separates or retires, and in so doing, has earned our unwavering commitment to ensuring that they possess the tools that position them for success as they transition and as they continue to serve our Nation as honored and distinguished veterans. Thank you, also, for your steadfast support for all Navy men and women – active, reserve and veteran, and for the programs that sustain them during and following their distinguished careers of voluntary service to the Navy and our Nation.

Mr. Thomas Yavorski
Executive Director, 21st Century Sailor Office
(Office of Chief of Naval Operations – N17)

Thomas Yavorski was born and grew up in Whippany, New Jersey. He attended the United States Naval Academy where he graduated in 1981 with distinction with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry and was commissioned as a naval officer.

Following Surface Warfare Officers' School, Tom reported to the USS Whipple (FF-1062) in Pearl Harbor where he served as Electrical Officer, Main Propulsion Assistant, and First Lieutenant. His next assignment was an Instructor of Naval Science at the United States Naval Academy.

He was selected for the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program and completed training at Orlando, Florida and Saratoga Springs, New York. His next assignment was as Reactor Mechanical Assistant on USS Enterprise (CVN-65) where he completed his nuclear engineer qualification.

Tom then attended Surface Warfare Officer Department Head School, where he was the top graduate and was selected for the Arleigh Burke Leadership award. Tom's next assignment was as Operations Officer and Navigator onboard USS Jarrett (FFG-33). Tom then reported as Executive Officer of the Nuclear Power Training Unit, Idaho Falls where he supervised the training of 1200 Sailors and officers.

He reported next to the Bureau of Naval Personnel, where he was Deputy Director of the Resource Management Office for the Navy's Quality of Life Programs (Pers-6C). Tom was medically retired in 1996 from the Navy after being selected for Commander.

Tom then joined the Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation Washington Liaison Office where he worked Navy policy issues in the areas of MWR and child care, which later became part of the Pers-6 Washington Liaison Office.

In 1999, Tom was detailed to the Navy Office of Legislative Affairs and was selected for a legislative fellowship with the Brookings Institute. During his fellowship, he was assigned as the military legislative assistant for Congressman Steven Kuykendall (CA-36), a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

He was then selected as the N15 Washington Office deputy director and lead program analyst on personal and family readiness issues. In 2007, Tom was promoted to Director of the N135 Personal Readiness and Community Support Washington Office. In 2013, he assumed duties as Executive Director of the 21st Century Sailor Office. Key issues that Tom has been involved with include 9/11 Joint Pentagon Family Assistance Center; establishment of Navy Wounded Warrior SAFE HARBOR program; Navy Suicide Prevention and Sexual Assault Prevention cross functional teams; Navy support of Census 2010; Family Readiness; Chairman Joints Chiefs of Staff Spouse Employment Integrated Process Team, and the Interagency Task Force on Veteran Employment Assistance.

Tom also received a Masters Degree in Management Information Systems from the George Washington University School of Business and Management in 1999.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: AIR FORCE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

STATEMENT OF:

MR. HORACE L. "HL" LARRY
DEPUTY, AIR FORCE SERVICES DIRECTORATE
MANPOWER, PERSONNEL AND SERVICES
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

OCTOBER 28, 2015

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE

Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, and Distinguished Members of this Subcommittee, on behalf of Secretary of the Air Force, Deborah Lee James, we appreciate the leadership and support you continue to provide on matters affecting the readiness and quality of life of our Airmen and their families. Today, the Total Force Airmen of your Air Force are highly trained and experienced, with relentless drive and determination. These attributes are especially commendable when considering the demands overseas contingency operations, humanitarian support missions, and funding constraints have put on our remarkable warriors and their families. As we look towards the future, we continue to emphasize our primary objective of supporting our Air Force missions around the world, as well as our objective of preparing our Airmen for life and success in the civilian sector after transitioning from military service. Our Air Force leadership is fully engaged and firmly committed to accomplishing these objectives.

Since 2011, the Air Force has been sharply focused on the redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to support Airmen as they transition back to civilian life. The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 ("VOW Act"), and the Veterans Employment Initiative, drove a host of TAP actions to expand training and employment services for Active Duty, Reserve, and Guard members when they transition from the military to the private sector. Further, the VOW Act and Veterans Employment Initiative mandated that all Airmen separating or retiring from the Air Force complete the Transition Assistance Program, which includes pre-separation counseling, Department of Veterans Affairs benefits briefings, attendance at a Department of Labor Employment Workshop, and a Capstone event that either validates that servicemembers have completed all requirements, or arranges further assistance, in an effort to help foster a smooth transition.

To that end, two of the biggest and more progressive changes to the Air Force Transition Assistance Program are implementation of the Military Life Cycle Transition model and Air Force Credentialing Opportunities Online tool. We will briefly highlight these two programs.

First, the Air Force has embraced a “begin with the end in mind” Transition Assistance Program construct by preparing our Airmen for civilian life from the start of their military careers. We do this by leveraging our already existing professional development programs as touch points in the Military Life Cycle Transition model, and encouraging greater cooperation between the variety of offices collaborating on transition efforts. For example, for years the Air Force has had the First Term Airmen’s Centers where all Airmen are required to attend the program at their first permanent duty station. During this multi-day program, Airmen are introduced to many topics, including professional development opportunities and a four-hour financial brief, which includes developing a personal budget. They are also introduced to the Military Life Cycle which showcases how transition assistance information will be addressed throughout their career. The Military Life Cycle’s touch points include reenlistment counseling, permanent change of station and off-duty education briefings, and feedback sessions where information on professional development is discussed.

Secondly, the Air Force has implemented the Air Force Credentialing Opportunities Online tool. This tool provides a mechanism that correlates skills and training for Military Occupational Specialties with skills and training required for civilian certifications and licenses. This translation of the military experience into civilian skills is an important part of building career ready Airmen. This program also pays for any examinations and re-certifications required for civilian credentialing. The combination of military training and corresponding civilian

training makes our transitioning Airmen highly marketable and desired resources for public and private industry, thus enhancing their opportunities for employment following military duty.

Starting in technical school, Airmen are provided information that details the courses and capabilities their training provides and how this foundation can lead to an Associate's Degree awarded by the Community College of the Air Force. Embedded in an Airman's formal Career Field Education and Training Plan is information on credentialing as well as educational opportunities provided by the Community College of the Air Force. The college is a tremendous contributor to the educational development of our Airmen and awards over 22,000 associates degrees from 68 programs annually. The Air Force continues to value post-secondary education as a force enabler, recognizing it positively affects recruitment, retention, and readiness. Further, this education is a key component in developing our Airmen as it directly enhances critical thinking skills. These skills strengthen a member's performance capabilities, contribute to mission success as well as personal growth, and ultimately assist their our members when transitioning from the military.

In terms of collaboration, we prepare our Airmen for transition in partnership with the Department of Labor, Veterans Affairs, Office of Personnel Management, Department of Education and the Small Business Administration. Collectively, these partners deliver a purposeful Transition Assistance Program that helps ensure transitioning Airmen are ready for careers in civilian life -- whether as a full-time student, employee and/or business owner. Additionally, these partners engage industry and provide opportunities for the Air Force and our Sister Services to participate in roundtable discussions with industry leaders to foster continued connections and skill set correlation between employers and transitioning service members.

One important population of transitioning Airmen is our Wounded, Ill and Injured. In addition to these members offering the civilian community a firsthand look at Air Force developed skills, they also extend a unique opportunity to witness truly resilient Airmen. The Transition Assistance Program assists these recovering Airmen with identifying areas of expertise and matching their capabilities with related career or educational opportunities, thereby increasing the likelihood of a successful transition. The impact of a recovering Airman's journey is powerful and serves as an inspiration for all contributors in the Transition Assistance Program, to include our civilian partners.

CONCLUSION

Our Airmen and their families continue to be the backbone of our Air Force and we do everything we can to foster their success while in uniform as well as their separation or retirement from the military. Investments in them are inextricably linked to our Service's ability to recruit, develop, support and retain a world-class, all-volunteer Force. The Air Force remains committed to ensuring Airmen, as they depart military service, are ready for the challenges and rewards of civilian life and we extend a great deal of gratitude to our private sector partners. Mr. Chairman, again, we appreciate the leadership and support of this subcommittee and we are exceptionally proud of our Total Force Airmen. With your backing and our collective commitment, we will continue to ensure our Airmen are ready when they transition back to the private sector. We are creating a win-win situation where our Airmen succeed as employees, students, or business owners, as well as serve as essential and productive members of this great nation's civilian society. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and pending your questions this concludes my remarks.

HORACE L. "H.L." LARRY

H.L. Larry, a member of the Senior Executive Service, is Deputy Director of Air Force Services, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Personnel, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C. His organization's mission is to increase combat capability and improve productivity through programs promoting readiness, esprit de corps and quality of service for Air Force people. Mr. Larry provides policy, technical direction and oversight for the \$2 billion worldwide services program. This includes Comprehensive Airmen Fitness, physical fitness, peacetime and wartime troop feeding, Air Force mortuary affairs operations, Armed Forces entertainment, Air Force protocol, lodging and libraries. It also includes child development centers, youth centers and a wide spectrum of recreation activities. He provides oversight for uniforms, awards and recognition; Airman and family readiness; and other commander- interest programs that contribute to force sustainment.

Mr. Larry was commissioned in the Air Force in 1975. Over the next 30 years, he was assigned to Hancock Field, N.Y., North Charleston Air Force Station, S.C., and Aviano Air Base, Italy, where he was Chief, Morale, Welfare and Recreation. He also served at Headquarters U.S. Air Force, the Air Force Personnel Center, the Air Force Services Agency, and a tour at the Air Force Secretariat level.

Mr. Larry's leadership positions include deputy support group commander; Commander of the Air Force Services Agency; San Antonio, Texas; and Deputy Director of Air Force Services in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations and Logistics at Headquarters U.S. Air Force. He retired from the Air Force in August 2005 as a colonel. Mr. Larry became a civil service employee in 2006 and a federal contractor in 2007, serving as Senior Program Manager for Logistics Applications Inc. at Headquarters U.S. Department of Energy, Washington, D.C. He was appointed to the Senior Executive Service in 2009.

EDUCATION

- 1975 Bachelor of Science degree in social science, Mississippi Valley State University
- 1979 Master of Science degree in business administration/management, Central Michigan University
- 1980 Squadron Officer School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.
- 1983 Air Command and Staff College, by seminar
- 1990 Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
- 1995 Air War College, by correspondence
- 1996 Air War College and On-scene Commander's Course, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
- 1998 Wing Commander's Seminar, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
- 2009 Senior Leader Orientation Course, Washington, D.C.

CAREER CHRONOLOGY

1. August 1975 - October 1975, student, weapons controller training, Tyndall AFB, Fla.
2. October 1975 - February 1976, weapons controller, Hancock Field, N.Y.
3. February 1976 - August 1977, Chief, Base Administration, Hancock Field, N.Y.
4. August 1977 - November 1977, Chief, Services Division, Hancock Field, N.Y.
5. November 1977 - June 1980, Chief, Administration, and Unit Fund custodian, 792nd Radar Squadron, North Charleston Air Force Station, S.C.
6. July 1980 - September 1980, student, Squadron Officer School, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
7. October 1980 - June 1983, executive officer to the Civil Engineer and to the Director of Operations; Chief, Base Administration; and protocol officer, 40th Tactical Group, Aviano Air Base, Italy
8. July 1983 - June 1986, Chief, Morale, Welfare and Recreation, Aviano AB, Italy
9. July 1986 - July 1989, Chief, MWR Plans; and Division Chief, MWR Business Branch, Air Force Personnel Center, Randolph AFB, Texas
10. August 1989 - June 1990, student, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala
11. July 1990 - June 1994, MWR and Services staff officer and Chief, Plans and Evaluation Division, Directorate of Services, Office of the Vice Chief of Staff, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.

12. June 1994 - July 1995, military assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Force Management and Personnel, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.
13. August 1995 - June 1996, student, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
14. July 1996 - July 1998, Deputy Commander, 31st Support Group, Aviano AB, Italy
15. July 1998 - August 2001, Commander, Air Force Services Agency, San Antonio, Texas
16. September 2001 - August 2005, Deputy Director, Directorate of Services, Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations and Logistics, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.
17. March 2006 - July 2007, Program Manager, Air Force Lodging and Fitness, Directorate of Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.
18. August 2007 - July 2009, Senior Program Manager, Logistics Applications Inc., Headquarters U.S. Department of Energy, Washington, D.C.
19. July 2009 - present, Deputy Director, Directorate of Services, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Personnel, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster
 Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters

(Current as of March 2014)

**WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING
THE HEARING**

OCTOBER 28, 2015

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. COFFMAN

General IACOCCA. Transitioning RA Soldiers do not get training or schooling required for a new Reserve Component (RC) MOS or unit while they are still on active duty. If a Soldier transitions from active duty and joins the Reserve Component (RC) and that Soldier has already signed into his or her RC unit, then the RC funds the training (assuming it is a “will-train” position) after he/she transitions off of active duty. In some cases that training happens immediately after the transition, and in other cases it may happen months post-transition. The exception to this norm is the 365 Pilot Training Program at Fort Hood. That pilot allows a Soldier to train in a new military occupational specialty prior to transitioning off of active duty from the Regular Army. The Army Marketing and Research Group funded this pilot for Fiscal Year 2015. However, funds are still pending for Fiscal Year 2016. The program is on track to expand to Fort Bragg later this year pending the release of a third fragmentary order and additional funds. [See page 28.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

OCTOBER 28, 2015

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. WALZ

Mr. WALZ. It is encouraging to learn of the continued emphasis and on-going successful development of the Transition Assistance Program? Looking forward, what additional assistance from Congress, if any, do you require in order to increase the effectiveness of the program?

Dr. KELLY. The Department is very appreciative of the support Congress, and this Committee in particular, has given to our transitioning Service members. We would appreciate your continued support and assistance in directing your constituent Service members to:

- register at an American Job Center and take advantage of the programs and services they provide regarding employment assistance;
- apply for VA benefits immediately, if they did not do so prior to separation; and
- use their robust Post-9/11 G.I. Bill wisely.

Congress can continue to support TAP by encouraging employers in your respective districts to take advantage of the job announcement, skills training, and placement opportunities available to them at the American Job Centers in your state. The American Job Centers now have millions of dollars in funding to help employers develop new apprenticeships and skills training that are needed in the local economies. All jobs are local. The more employers engage with the local American Job Centers, the more Veterans can return to their local communities and look forward to economic opportunity.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. KNIGHT

Mr. KNIGHT. Do we have a system in place for ensuring every vet's "hand-off" has succeeded 6, 12, 24 months down the road? How are service men and women "tagged and tracked," so to speak, by TAP?

Dr. KELLY. The Department of Defense's authority and ability to track a Service member ends once a Service member separates from the military. However, as members of the TAP interagency governance body, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Labor (DOL), and the Small Business Administration are working on developing long-term outcome indicators/measures of TAP. The successful use of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill for completion of a college degree and the new business formation rate for those veterans interested in pursuing entrepreneurship are two examples of ensuring long-term success. Additional long-term, outcome-oriented evaluations are in development by the VA and DOL to further strengthen the interagency evaluation approach and ensure that the TAP is continuously improved. For example, VA intends to conduct a survey to veterans (post-transition) on the value of the TAP. Due to the Department of Defense's limited role after a Service member separates, our TAP interagency partners are better suited to provide additional data on the long-term effectiveness of TAP.

Mr. KNIGHT. What percent of service men and women leaving the Armed Forces today who want jobs transition to jobs within 6 months? And within a year?

Dr. KELLY. The Department of Defense's authority and ability to track a Service member ends once a Service member separates from the military. Our Transition Assistance Program (TAP) interagency partners, particularly the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor, have mechanisms in place and in development to assess such outcomes of Veterans. In particular, the Department of Labor, through its National Longitudinal Survey, is able to track the employment situation over time of some Veterans. Due to the Department of Defense's limited role after separation, the Department of Labor may be better suited to supply this data.

Mr. KNIGHT. What letter grade, or qualitative assessment, would each of the military branches give the TAP today? How much has TAP improved since 2011?

General WHITMAN. Our qualitative assessment of TAP is that it is a vital, useful tool for Marines; it has improved significantly since 2011. TAP continues to gain mo-

mentum as we move forward in the Marine For Life Cycle with increased inter-agency collaboration, an improved governance process, and annual reviews and updates. Metrics have been put in place to track its effectiveness. Working groups with interagency partners discuss challenges and implement improvements in the program. Through these efforts, we remain actively involved and committed to ensuring Marines are successfully meeting in-service and post-transition goals.

Mr. KNIGHT. What letter grade, or qualitative assessment, would each of the military branches give the TAP today? How much has TAP improved since 2011?

General IACOCCA. VOW to Hire Heroes Act compliance through third quarter Fiscal Year 2015 was 90% for Active Component. For this reason the Army overall correlates as an “A–” for executing Transition Assistance Program (TAP) services, whereas Army was a “B” in Fiscal Year 2014 with Active Component at 83% compliance.

The Army is doing well and improving year after year meeting the law and the additional White House components of TAP. In the last five years, the Army’s Soldier for Life–Transition Assistance Program (SFL–TAP) has grown from 54 to 75 centers worldwide, and from 225 to 700 transition, financial, and education counselors and staff. The program added a center in Kuwait, and established mobile transition teams to support the National Guard and Army Reserve at home and at demobilization stations. Additionally, the Army created a 24/7 Virtual SFL–TAP Center to meet the needs of remotely located Soldiers, those deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and for any Soldier that needed to receive transition services telephonically or virtually.

Furthermore, the Army has improved Soldiers’ opportunities to reach their post-transition career and education goals by establishing a Career Skills Program. The Career Skills Program affords transitioning Soldiers the opportunity to obtain industry-recognized credentials, the opportunity to participate in first-class apprenticeships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, and employment skills training up to 180 days prior to transitioning from the Army.

Finally, the Army is working to improve the accuracy of our TAP assessments by increasing the quality and quantity of post-transition feedback from our partnering agencies of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor, and the Internal Revenue Service.

Mr. KNIGHT. What letter grade, or qualitative assessment, would each of the military branches give the TAP today? How much has TAP improved since 2011?

Mr. YAVORSKI. I would give the Navy Transition Assistance Program (TAP) a grade of B+, and improving. Sailor feedback reflects that 86 percent agreed, or strongly agreed, that TAP was beneficial in helping them gain the information and skills to better plan for transition. Since 2011, the program has greatly improved as a result of:

- revising the core transition assistance curriculum and increasing the length from four days to five days;
- adopting career readiness standards upon which the new curriculum is based;
- adding two-day tracks on assessing higher education, career technical training, and entrepreneurship. (Sailors can also take the Small Business Administration advanced entrepreneurial workshop);
- adding a capstone event to ensure Sailors meet career readiness standards, or are provided a warm handoff to partner agencies;
- incorporating the transition Military Life Cycle into our existing career development program to prepare Sailors for eventual transition throughout their military career;
- offering Sailors the opportunity to pursue employment skills training during the last 180 days of active duty.
- updating curriculum software, enhancing WiFi capability, and adding 2,493 new computers to facilitate an interactive classroom environment; and
- improving access to classroom curriculum for remote overseas locations.

We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of Navy TAP with an eye towards opportunities for additional program enhancements based on sharing lessons learned from the current program across the Department of Defense.

Mr. KNIGHT. What letter grade, or qualitative assessment, would each of the military branches give the TAP today? How much has TAP improved since 2011?

Mr. LARRY. The Air Force believes an “A” should be awarded to today’s TAP. Since 2011, the Air Force has been sharply focused on the redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to support Airmen as they transition back to civilian life. The Air Force prepares our Airmen for transition in partnership with the Department of Labor, Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Personnel Management, Department of Education and the Small Business Administration. Collectively, these partners provide services or support for delivering a purposeful Transition Assist-

ance Program that helps ensure transitioning Airmen are ready for the next steps in civilian life—whether as a full-time student, employee and/or business owner—to help them in having successful careers. The Air Force remains committed to ensuring Airmen, as they depart military service, are ready for the challenges and rewards of civilian life and we extend a great deal of gratitude to our private sector partners.

